Reaching New Youth Audiences

The Situation
In Ada County, 80% of the women with children under 18 work outside the home. Because of the greater number of parents in the work force, there are fewer available volunteers for youth programs. Forming partnerships with other agencies is necessary for continued programming. Ada County 4-H reaches new youth audiences through a summer program in Boise city parks. These youth attend a day camp sponsored by Boise City Parks & Recreation Department. The extended day camp program offers supervised activities five days a week at various city parks throughout Boise. Parents arrange for their children to attend on a weekly basis. Children are at these park sites from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Our Response
The University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Ada County 4-H Program, in collaboration with the Parks Department, developed a special program in 1995. The purpose of this effort introduced non-traditional youth to 4-H. Many urban youth have never heard of 4-H. Hands-on learning resulted in a positive image for 4-H and agriculture. 4-H provided a variety of workshops and fun. The daily schedule of the camp program included:
- 4-H traditions
- Team building with 4-H Olympics
- Recycling
- Science
- Foods and nutrition
- Plants and soils
- Gardening
- Crops identification
- Heritage handicrafts
- Bread
- Large and small livestock.

Each 2-hour hands-on session included a short introduction, 4-H pledge, songs, and background information about the activity of the day. Participants in each park designed and painted a banner to hang in the 4-H Exhibit of the Exposition Building at the Western Idaho Fair. Each banner was 3 feet by 10 feet and carried out the 1997 Fair theme “Western Idaho Fair — A Centennial A-Fair.” Youth received a 4-H sticker, pin or certificate of participation.

Eleven teen 4-H members, ages 12 to 14, volunteered to be Day Camp Counselors Their responsibilities included:
- Planning and conducting activities
- Leading songs and recreation
- Teaching the 4-H pledge
- Record keeping.

Evaluation of the activities involved all the teens. As a result, teens modified the daily routine. This experience allowed a lot of personal growth for
the young people. In addition, several teens completed the Leadership IV project. One teen commented, "I really enjoyed this project because I made lots of friends, got to practice being flexible, got to teach other kids, and had lots of fun!"

Achievements

- A total of 3,263 youth participated in the three year period.
- Total 4-H enrollment increased.
- Urban youth demonstrated more awareness of 4-H.
- Urban youth learned about agriculture.
- Additional collaborative efforts with Boise Parks Department are available.

Evaluation comments included:

(from staff):

- "I like the songs, especially the Squirrel song. Tortilla day was my favorite. The activities that were planned were appropriate. There was good organization, and I liked the way it was organized with a beginning, the activity and the closing. The kids really liked the certificates."

(from participants):

- "It was a lot of fun." "I love it." "I like to join in on all the stuff." "I learned a lot of new stuff." "I wish it was every day." "I want to join 4-H." "Can you do cooking and bugs at the same time? That's what I'm most interested in."

- "4-H is really fun. Some kids made mistakes by not choosing to do 4-H. There was a lot of fun stuff to make."

- "I like 4-H because we learned a lot of nice songs and we get the opportunity to do a lot of fun stuff." "My mom likes to hear about our 4-H days when we come home because we make a lot of cool stuff." "Ice cream was really good."

Cooperators

Boise City Parks & Recreation Department
Wheat Commission
Idaho Dairy Products Commission
Idaho State Grange
Amalgamated Sugar Company

Future

The University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System has been asked to continue this program for 1998. Planning will begin in the spring.

For More Information

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