

Through local clubs, camps and after-school programs, 4-H strengthens family relationships and community networks for more than 6.5 million young people across the nation. 4-H supports youth and their families through research-based programs at 106 state universities and 3,100 extension offices. In 4-H programs, youth in rural, suburban and urban communities experience hands-on learning in healthy living; leadership; citizenship; and science, engineering and technology while gaining valuable life skills. “For more than a century, 4-H has worked to empower the nation’s youth with a sense of independence, confidence and community service,” says National 4-H Council President and CEO Donald T. Floyd, Jr. “By involving parents and families, we are ensuring that youth are supported as they reach their fullest potential.”



4-H

NEBRASKA

DIVERSE YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIPS IN RURAL NEBRASKA

4-H NEBRASKA

Award-Winning Program: Diverse Youth-Adult Partnerships in Rural Nebraska

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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2008 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A COMMUNITY COLLABORATION OF YOUTH AND ADULTS

When young people work with their parents to tackle issues facing their communities, families become stronger and neighborhoods improve. In many rural communities throughout Nebraska, there are no movie theaters, malls, soccer fields or ice cream shops. Beyond the lack of recreational opportunities for youth, many of these communities also lack positive, educational programs for youth. Diverse Youth-Adult Partnerships in Rural Nebraska, a Nebraska 4-H program, gives youth an opportunity to work with parents and other adults to collaboratively devise and implement projects that enrich their communities. In eight rural areas across the state – including Hispanic and Tribal communities – the program has pulled together “core teams” comprised of youth, parents, local officials and others who want to contribute to the strength of their town.

“Everyone benefits when community problems are tackled by children and parents, young people and adults, citizens and elected officials, all working together,” says Jeff Hart, faculty educator, special projects, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension.



MANY HISPANIC AND TRIBAL FAMILIES ARE SO CLOSELY KNIT THAT WHEN YOUTH GET INVOLVED IN LEADING THEIR COMMUNITIES, THEIR PARENTS GET INVOLVED, TOO. THIS YOUTH-ADULT PARTNERSHIP STRENGTHENS THE FAMILY WHILE ALSO STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION WITHIN THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

—Jeff Hart, faculty educator, special projects, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension

BEAUTIFYING A COMMUNITY, CELEBRATING LIFE

After core teams are formed, 4-H conducts two to three full days of training that covers skills such as leadership, working within a group, effective communication, facilitating discussions, prioritizing issues and action planning. The teams then hold community forums, inviting the general public to weigh in and help identify community needs. Teams have held as many as three forums for dozens of community members to provide their input.

Core teams prioritize community needs identified through the forums and create action plans to work on them. In Scottsbluff and Gering, youth leaders worked with adults to beautify blighted neighborhoods. They wrote a grant proposal and received funds from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum to paint over graffiti and complete landscaping. In Lexington, Latino youth and community leaders conducted voter registration drives, mentored younger youth and planned the community’s annual Hispanic Heritage Festival, attracting about 600 people. On the Omaha Tribe reservation, the core team identified youth suicide as a major issue and created a culturally appropriate educational awareness campaign including a Celebration of Life Festival.

“Though projects differ from community to community, all of them involve youth and adults working together, planning together and acting together, forming a more cohesive community,” Hart says. “Youth emerge as leaders through these teams, bridging the gap between their families and the community’s traditional leadership.”

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National 4-H Council, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize outstanding 4-H programs that work to give children in rural communities what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.