

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
OREGON

4-H TECH WIZARDS

4-H OREGON

Award-Winning Program: 4-H Tech Wizards

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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

HIGH RISK TO HIGH TECH

Youth and families are bound for success when they have the opportunities and resources they need to achieve their goals. Although Washington County, Ore., has prospered with the growth of high-technology industries, many of the county's Latino residents have not shared in the success as low-wage workers in agricultural, retail and service jobs. Among Latino youth, many struggle academically and drop out of school more often than their peers. But when Oregon 4-H asked local youth what they wanted to do in focus groups and interviews, the answer was clear: technology.

The 4-H Tech Wizards program teaches information technology, provides mentors through the locally-based Intel Corporation and involves the entire families of youth. Since 1999, more than 560 low-income Latino youth in grades 9 to 12 have participated in the program with their parents. Despite the high risk of dropping out of school, 95 percent of Tech Wizard seniors have graduated with their diplomas, and 70 percent have gone on to higher education in science, technology, engineering or math.



WE DON'T WANT TO REINFORCE THE GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LATINO PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN. SO WE VISIT FAMILIES AT HOME, INCLUDE THE PARENTS AND GET TO KNOW THEM WITH A CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE APPROACH. WE BECOME A RESOURCE TO THE PARENTS AND THE YOUTH.

—Lisa Conroy, 4-H youth development educator and 4-H Tech Wizards coordinator

LEGO ROBOTS AND FAMILY MEETINGS

In the program, students participate in hands-on learning projects such as developing web sites, producing podcasts and videos, learning mapping technologies and building Lego robots for competition.

In addition to teaching new technology skills, 4-H engages and supports students' families to ensure that home life is conducive to learning. At the beginning of every school year, bilingual staffers visit students' homes to meet with parents and share information about the program. They also help to identify parents' needs and connect them to community resources that help them improve their own futures. With a laptop loaning system, 4-H Tech Wizards also allows families without computers to borrow laptops and take them home for homework and job searching-related uses. "When parents see what their kids are learning, they get inspired to increase their own education and work skills," says Lisa Conroy, 4-H Tech Wizards coordinator.

Centro Cultural, a Latino community center and partner of the 4-H Tech Wizards program, provides parents with a host of supports, including parenting education, access to a computer lab, literacy programs, workforce preparation and English classes. 4-H Tech Wizards also holds twice monthly family meetings at Centro Cultural for parents and youth to share a meal and learn about topics such as effective communication and hear from speakers such as law enforcement officials.

"By working with the whole family, we are successful in helping youth in our communities gain knowledge and success in science and technology," Conroy says.

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.