

4-H Power of YOUTH

4-H is the youth development program of our nation's Cooperative Extension System.

EYSC Summit Equips Youth in Nevada

More than 100 teenagers from rural Nevada visited the University of Nevada-Reno, campus to receive training as youth leaders interested in service learning projects that will make community impact. The Summer Youth Leadership Summit was spearheaded by extension professionals from the University of Nevada-Reno Cooperative Extension's *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* (EYSC) program.

Program coordinator Sarah Chvilicek said that Summit participants included youth and adults representing the underserved communities of Yerington, Pyramid Lake, Smith, Silver Springs, Hawthorne, Dayton, Fernley, Virginia City, and Schurz. The Summit was designed to increase life skills and leadership to be able to more effectively address the needs of their community. Most of these youth-adult partnerships had already identified a specific need in their communities and were implementing projects to address those needs. The Summit gave them the skills and tools they need to succeed.

"There were workshop sessions on team building, public speaking, higher education, budget and personal finance, and leadership," Chvilicek said. Three of the communities have focused on career and workforce preparation as priority community issues while the other two addressed specific community needs such as hunger and poverty.

A key part of the Summit were the community service projects participants performed as a group which included planting trees and moving sod at Rancho San Rafael Park and working at the Reno-Sparks Gospel Mission and the mission's warehouse. ■



4-H Youth Partner to Solve Community Problems

4-H's *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* Year 9 (EYSC9) program awarded grants to 11 land-grant universities to develop, implement, and evaluate youth-facilitated community-based issues forums with action plans in rural communities.

For four of these Extension Service programs, EYSC9 represented the second year of work in a longitudinal effort of funding the same communities. Seven new land-grant universities started to engage in this youth in governance program model beginning a new longitudinal cohort. Results in this second effort to test the youth-driven solutions to community problems continue to be impressive:

- 697 youth in 55 targeted rural communities participated on state and local leadership teams. They partnered with 396 adults to develop youth-adult partnerships.
- These leadership teams engaged an additional 2,534 youth and 552 adults to implement action plans to solve priority community issues.
- Approximately 69 percent of the youth leadership team members held additional community leadership positions such as community council member and youth advisory commission, nearly doubling the number from the previous year.
- The youth provided a total of 53,398 volunteer hours. Adults contributed 28,647 hours. Using the Independent Sector Index value of \$21.36 per hour of volunteer time, there was more than \$1.8 million provided in in-kind support.
- Twenty-two percent of the participants represented Black, Native American, Asian and mixed race populations.
- Ninety-four percent of the communities collaborated with nearly 150 partners, including government agencies, school systems and community organizations to solve community issues. These groups brought an additional 1,379 youth and 934 adults into the program.
- Grant money was leveraged \$4.80 for each federal grant dollar with cash and in-kind support, including the value of the volunteer labor.

The EYSC program is made possible by the Rural Youth Development Grant (RYD) #2008-45201-04715 provided by the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through National 4-H Council. USDA's national collaborative partners in the RYD Grant Program are 4-H, FFA, and Girl Scouts of the USA. ■



Top Photo: Tai Thrasher receiving recognition with an individual youth leadership award presented by Missouri Community Betterment. MCB is a 49-year-old statewide awards and recognition program for small communities. Bottom Photo: Lamar received first place in the youth category of their population group at the Missouri Community Betterment banquet.

Youth Passion for Ecological Education and Restoration in Wisconsin



Top Photo: Members of the Sauk Prairie Green Team pose after a day of work with their project. Bottom Left Photo: A newly-erected blue bird house is checked out by a member of the Sauk Prairie Green Team.

The Sauk Prairie area is known for its bald eagle populations and bird migration flyways, although the focus is often on the eagles to the exclusion of all other bird life. The towns of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City had long wanted to earn the designation of "Bird City," which would draw more tourists in and encourage improvement of the

wildlife habitat. One section of the annual application for Wisconsin "Bird City" had not been completed "Limiting or removing hazards to birds." The youth chose this as their specific contribution to this important economic and ecological project.

Under the leadership of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the 27 teens and their 5 adult partners, Sauk Prairie Green Team, researched, collected data from residents and local experts, and developed a treatment plan to address education about and prevention of bird deaths. Youth created surveys, educational brochures, public service TV and web site announcements, and treatment plans for windows identified as hazards in bird flight paths.

Bird strike data was collected before, during, and after treatment; and will continue to be collected at three, six, and 12 months after treatment to share with the community regarding bird strikes. A website has been created to collect, analyze, and share the data.

The youth efforts were successful and the town received its "Bird City" status. However, there was more gained than just this recognition. The youth collaborated with over two dozen school, government, and wildlife organizations, including the Sauk Prairie Special Olympics, as well as 350 individual residents.

As one youth stated, "Your group has so much fun and you're really making a difference in town. The adults actually listen to your ideas. Can I join you?"

The focus on maintaining the "Bird City" status continues, but the group has expanded its activities in ecological engagement to include building bird houses to improve blue bird populations, as well as a continuing wildlife habitat improvement project to build the knowledge of community members on the issues of habitat improvement and local wildlife. This includes trash removal, the clearing of invasive plant species, and the removal/repair/cleaning of existing birdhouses along the river front. ■

Chattooga County 4-H Teens Spark Community Revitalization



Top right: Candice Bishop presents a "Service with a Smile" Award to shop owner Will Wagner. Top left: Abraham Carrillo presents a "Service with a Smile" award to a local shop owner. Bottom: Tiffany Maynard, Melissa Maynard, Faith Coalson, Victoria Hall, Cody Conner, and Abraham Carrillo pose with some of the planters they created to bring a fresh look to the business district of Summerville.

When 4-H teens looked around their home community of Summerville, GA (population 4,528), they saw vacant store windows and a general drabness that did not make the business district look welcoming to either new businesses

looking for a home or potential patrons. They teamed up with local concerned adults to undertake an economic improvement project, now beginning its third year.

Beginning with a simple beautification project, the team provided 41 hanging baskets with seasonal flowers, and followed up with the upkeep of the baskets in the downtown areas. This led to more work to revitalize and clean-up downtown Summerville and highlight the county's positive attributes. A different business was recognized each week with a **SERVICE WITH A SMILE** award. There were 52 award recipients who were acknowledged on local TV and radio.

The effort has grown to include a monthly open house for businesses after-hours, which is supported by the community as a whole. Six new businesses have joined downtown during this period and the EYSC efforts have contributed to this growth.

In addition to the youth-adult partnership team of 8 adults and 22 youth, Chattooga EYSC has worked collaboratively with the Chattooga County Government, Better Home Town,

Lowe's home improvement store, Extension Master Gardener's, the ACCG (Association of County Commissioners), the local school system, FFA, and Chattooga County Garden Club. This project has been led through the University of Georgia State 4-H Program.

The EYSC Project has resulted in great recognition for Chattooga 4-H, including involvement in the planning and coordination of six community festivals and serving as greeters for the weekly train excursions coming through town and providing a great opportunity for the town to promote itself to out-of-state tourists.

The youth are collecting data about the sales tax revenue raised since their efforts in order to track the economic impact of their work upon the community.

Jenny Jordan of the Georgia State 4-H staff and co-PI, said, "The Summerville 4-H EYSC project is the essence of 4-H and making the best better. The youth and adults have done an incredible job of making their hometown a better place and in the process are developing self-directed and contributing citizens." ■

Growing Green in Seaford, Delaware

When the EYSC Youth-Adult Leadership Team of Seaford, DE looked at the issues surrounding their small, rural town, they saw high unemployment and poverty preventing families from being able to purchase fresh vegetables to improve their diets. Within the student body, 84% were on free or reduced lunch. Almost sixty percent of students were from low-income families and experiencing the need for fresh food at reasonable cost.

Determined to help with that situation, the 4-H group partnered with the Seaford High School FFA to grow fresh produce using hydroponic gardening. Their research showed this technique has the ability to grow produce year-round in a controlled environment.

Leveraging a Department of Education grant of \$10,000, the youth built their facilities and were up and running in a few months. They chose bibb lettuce as a crop that can be grown in about six weeks and managed to cut that production time in half, thus doubling their crop.

The team provides approximately 75 heads of lettuce a week to the school cafeteria, improving the school menu with fresh produce. In the summer, their crop was sold through the local farmers' market, where they also gave demonstrations around healthy eating. Funds raised are reinvested in the project. Their outreach included the local elementary school, where the teens shared hands-on learning to teach younger youth how to eat to improve their diets.

Annual yield was approximately 1,100 heads, saving their school about \$3,300. The team hopes to add fresh herbs as well. The team plans to demonstrate to the public that food can be produced at home, and that locally-grown food is fresher and more nutritious than food shipped from far away locations.

This project was led by the University of Delaware. ■



EYSC youth grew this beautiful lettuce through a hydroponics joint FFA/4-H project to end food deserts for low income families in Seaford, DE.

ReFRESH Emmett, through 4-H Youth Engagement

The EYSC youth-adult leadership team, trained under the University of Idaho 4-H Program, named their project "ReFRESH Emmett." This title was voted on because everyone lives in a technical world and, as was said by one of the members, "You can look at something on your screen and then click the refresh button and a whole different world appears."

The goals of the project were identified after collecting more than 350 ideas at a community-wide Youth Appreciation Day and a town hall meeting facilitated by the youth. The forum was attended by more than 100 community members. The team organized itself into those working to achieve short-term goals of providing a wide variety of community, family-friendly activities while others researched the longer-term goal of securing a family activity center such as a YMCA Satellite Program or a skating rink.

During the first year, seven community activities attracted wide participation such as 60 at a family dance party, 75 at a community bonfire, 193 at a "Winter Wonderland Dance." Meanwhile, the long-term goal committee examined empty buildings and interviewed organizations in other towns to see what it would take to attract a permanent family activity center. There were 17 collaborative partners that the youth engaged while working on their goals.

According to Erika Thiel, Extension Associate with the University of Idaho and EYSC Idaho principal investigator, "The team has worked very hard to provide safe community-wide events to increase community spirit and partnerships as well as promote connections between the generations." ■



ReFRESH Emmett EYSC Team collaborated with 4-H, Idaho Fish and Game, Sportsman's Warehouse, Cabela's, Indianhead Fly Fishers, Gem County Mosquito Abatement, and King Fisher Sporting Goods to offer a free fishing camp. Over 200 families attended. Pictured are children riding on a Boise River Volunteer pontoon boat.

"Emmett is a cool place to be a kid."

-Quote from Youth Participant



Postville, Iowa EYSC youth at work on their community garden under the leadership of the Allamakee County Agricultural Extension District.

Youth growing healthier foods and exercising more, establishment of food pantries to feed hungry peers, no youthful driver violations for alcohol consumption, teens teaching technology to adults are just a few of the impacts of *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* action projects implemented in 55 rural communities across the nation.

Evaluation reports also show increased leadership skills acquired by EYSC youth and adults. Cooperative Extension Services in

EYSC Programs Show Community Change

eleven states (Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Washington, and Wisconsin) have been able to sustain these projects in tough economic times through public-private partnerships, funding leverages, and the systemic implementation of best practices acquired through this program.

Using the Community Capitals Model of assessing change in rural communities, the 55 issue-based action plans enhanced human and social capitals in all projects, and select projects developed financial, natural, cultural, built, and political capital for the beneficiaries.

In its sixth year of implementation, EYSC has brought youth to the table as equal partners in community and economic development. This success is evident in responses on the "Observation of Project Outcome" survey. This survey of open-ended questions was

administered to 140 youth and adults at the conclusion of last year's program. ■

"I started working with the EYSC project in 2006 after a training.... I have learned so much that I have used in my 4-H club and in the other groups I work with. I have taught peers, younger kids and work alongside adults during this program. It has been an exciting adventure that has truly prepared me to go into the adult world. I am now in college and would not be nearly as successful if I had not participated in this program,"

-Youth University Core Team Member

Tech Wizardry for Friendsville, Maryland Adults



Above is the youth-adult leadership team from Friendsville at the state grantee training, including the town mayor who thought so much of the project that he made the 4-hour journey with the team to attend the training.

When the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project began in rural Friendsville, MD, the *Tech Wizards* program for teens was underway as part of the 4-H National Mentoring Program sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The EYSC leadership team analyzed needs

through a review of socioeconomic data available from the Garrett County Partnership for Children & Families and the SMART System for Kids as well as discussions with existing community groups of adults and youth.

A survey of 400 people at a community event revealed the adults were wistfully hoping that they, too, could have opportunities to learn; 72.5% of adults over the age of 25 have a high school degree, while 11.9% hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

A community forum facilitated by the youth validated the needs analysis results. The decision was made to bring *Tech Wizards* to Friendsville adults.

The project capitalizes on the enthusiasm of the youth and their natural affinity for new technology. Youth mentors from both high school and college are incorporated as community helpers. Individuals of all ages are encouraged to become tech wizards simply

by learning something new and then passing the information on to another.

The Friendsville Public Library has become the focal point for community learning through the collaboration of EYSC and OJJDP, partnering with the Garrett County Partnership for Children & Families, Board of Education, Engineering and Robotics Society and Economic Development, and the Friendsville Community Crime watch. The Town Council has enthusiastically embraced the EYSC project, with the mayor even taking time to attend the statewide training for the local EYSC community leadership team.

The librarian commented after an iPad class led by the youth, "That was the most people we have ever had in the library at one time. The class was a great success."

This project has been facilitated under the leadership of the University of Maryland. ■

4-H is a community of six million young people across America learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills. National 4-H Council is the private sector, non-profit partner of 4-H National Headquarters located at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIIFA) within USDA. 4-H programs are implemented by the 109 Land-Grant Universities and the Cooperative Extension System through their 3,100 local Extension offices across the country. Learn more about 4-H at www.4-H.org or find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/4-H.



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