

4-H Power of YOUTH

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

Engaging Youth, Serving Community Programs Show Community Change

How are Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC) action projects changing 46 rural communities across the nation? Youth are growing healthier foods and exercising more in the outdoors. They are establishing mentoring programs to help peers and teaching technology to adults. Families are learning to budget their money. They are all becoming leaders in their communities.

Cooperative Extension Services in ten states (Delaware, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Wisconsin and Washington) have been able to sustain these projects in challenging economic times through public-private partnerships, efficient use of funding and the systemic implementation of best practices acquired through this program.

Using the Community Capitals Model to assess change in rural communities, these 46 issue-based action plans enhanced human and social capitals in all projects, and some plans even improved the financial, cultural, environmental and political assets of the community.

In its eighth year of implementation using the Community Capital-based model, EYSC has brought youth to the table as equal partners in community and economic development. This success is evident in the "Observation of Outcome" survey by Mississippi State University which indicates that 90 percent of more of those surveyed believe medium and long-term outcomes have been achieved in the following ways:

- Teens and adults in rural communities are learning leadership skills;
- Community leaders demonstrated more positive attitudes about youth being involved in leadership roles;
- The EYSC projects reflected the diversity of the communities;
- Teens are more accountable to children as they become role models;
- Communities have seen more opportunities for youth to be involved in positive youth development activities;
- Participants show an increased commitment to their communities;
- Youth and adults learned to identify community issues and assets;
- Youth and adults applied leadership skills from training to community situations;
- Youth were involved in authentic decision-making partnerships with adults, and
- Trust has developed between youth-adult partners at the community leadership level. ■

4-H Youth Partner to Solve Community Problems

4-H's Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC) Year 11 program awarded grants to 10 land-grant universities (LGUs) to develop, implement and evaluate youth-facilitated community-based issues forums with action plans in 46 rural communities. Four LGU's received funding in EYSC Year 12 to complete implementation in 10 communities with a final eight months of work. Results in the effort to test the youth-driven solutions to community problems continue to be impressive:

- 483 youth in 46 targeted rural communities participated on state and local leadership teams, working with 166 adults to develop youth-adult partnerships.
- These leadership teams engaged an additional 1,639 youth and 831 adults to implement action plans to solve priority community issues.
- Approximately 60 percent of the youth leadership team members held additional community leadership positions such as community council member and youth advisory commission.
- The EYSC Year 11 leadership youth and adults provided a total of 27,256 volunteer hours. Using the Independent Sector Index value of \$23.07 per hour of volunteer time, there was more than \$579,797 provided in in-kind support to local communities. In EYSC Year 12, an additional 274 youth and adults added 6,264 hours valued at \$144,519.
- 60 percent of the participants represented Black, Native American, Asian and mixed race populations.
- 100 percent of the communities collaborated to solve community issues with partners, including government agencies, school systems and community organizations.
- Grant money was leveraged at \$15.27 for each federal grant dollar with cash and in-kind support, including the value of the volunteer labor.
- With EYSC Year 11, there were 27,197 community members who benefitted from the programs and an additional 9,414 with EYSC Year 12.

The EYSC program is made possible by the Rural Youth Development Grant 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. ■



Dylan Lalime (on left) receives the Principal's Award for Excellence and a \$1,000 scholarship from his high school principal, Jeremy Bousquet. Dylan was teen leader on a proposed Milo, Maine Skateboard Park Project and had never spoken up in class prior to this EYSC project. His improvement in school work and ability to work closely with Mr. Bousquet in every step of this project development earned this award.

Stanton, Kentucky Youth Educate Adults on Healthy Eating

Powell County was one of the most obese counties in Kentucky due to an over-abundance of poor quality food choices and a lack of education on how to eat healthier. With much of the county below the poverty line, healthy food was seen as an affordable luxury. The Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC) youth leadership team decided to address this issue through development of the "Health Pak" program providing health, nutrition and lifestyle education to both youth and adult attendees. Youth were taught basic nutrition and healthy decision making while the adults received education on how to prepare healthy, budget-friendly meals. Both were introduced to new ways

of shopping, comparing prices, couponing and selecting food options.

Families targeted were referred by community social service agencies who were often considered above the income level for existing social programs but still faced food insecurity and lack of education. The EYSC adult partners taught the parents how to cook economically and other important consumer skills, while the youth partners helped the younger family members learn more about healthy eating and snacks.

All of the adult participants indicated they were better able to budget and prepare healthy meals

as a result of these educational classes. Two of the 17 participating adults indicated that healthier eating allowed them to reduce or eliminate their prescription medicines resulting in a \$420 savings per year.

The program was expanded to provide food through a school-based backpack program (320 backpacks distributed during the school year) and to a limited resource family during the holidays (30 pounds of food valued at \$150).

This project was developed by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension. ■

Buckfield Adopts Holistic Approach to Health

Buckfield is a small rural town of 2,400 in western Maine's Oxford County, which was designated as Maine's unhealthiest county by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Under the Engaging Youth, Serving Community Program, Buckfield 100 middle school youth collaborated with adults from the community and school in-school and out to develop a multi-pronged solution for addressing food insecurity, increasing physical activity and growing and eating healthy local foods. Each year the entire middle school is involved with some aspect of the program, culminating in a community harvest supper for 250.

The project started in 2010 with a small garden which expanded to a one acre garden. An added farm stand fostered entrepreneurial skills, although foods were offered on a donation basis in recognition of the community's poverty. A trail system was also added to increase outdoor learning opportunities and involve the community in the school's ongoing projects. Teachers in the program have been named "teacher of the year" for their inspiring co-leadership with youth in these expanded learning opportunities. Further, as the school continues to educate and promote healthy life, more

students are eating from the salad bar, tasting new foods and having pride in their school through the garden project. ■



4-H@UMaine statewide youth conference led by EYSC youth.

EYSC Wows PYDI Conference

Barbara Baker and Maisey Griffin from Oxford County, Maine and Janet and Claire Woodard from Morgan County, Georgia, were seminar co-presenters at the Positive Youth Development Institute held July 20-21, 2015 at the University of New England in Biddeford, ME. The youth-adult team spoke about "Youth Leading Community Development; A PYD Model" from the result of their passion about the "Engaging Youth, Serving Community" (EYSC) program in Maine and Georgia, respectively. There were 200 attendees at the Institute, representing 17 states.



Claire Woodard from Morgan County, GA, tells about the "Teen Maze".

The two-day event encouraged adults working with young people to expand their understanding of the methods, theory and research that supports effective youth engagement and overall youth development. Numerous interactive breakout sessions were offered emphasizing practical strategies of Positive Youth Development (PYD) that have shown to result in meaningful change.

Barbara has been the overall leader of the EYSC Program in Maine, leading projects in Bethel, Bridgton, Buckfield, Milo, Oxford, and Newport communities. Maisey was the young adult presenter who has been leading GOT Farms in Bethel, where youth addressed health issues through school community gardens. Janet was the county 4-H educator whose EYSC project was a "Teen Maze" in which Clair was a teen leader. The "Teen

Maze" project addressed risky behavior decision-making. Both projects were excellent examples of the impact young adult leaders can make in changing their communities.

The 2016 Positive Youth Development Institute will be June 27-29 at the University of Southern Maine, Portland, ME. For more information, visit <http://www.pydi.net/>. ■



From left: Janet and Claire Woodard, Maisey Griffin and Barbara Baker presented their stories of teen impact at the 2015 PYDI Institute.

Coeur d'Alene Reservation, Idaho Answers Surgeon General's Walkability Challenge

Teens engaged in the EYSC program on the Coeur d'Alene Reservation utilized three of the four corners of the Medicine Wheel as their guide to identify community issues. Physical, emotional and mental well-being have been the focus since the program started in 2011. Despite high poverty rates in the area (17 percent unemployment and 29 percent poverty), EYSC has provided positive opportunities to the community.

Throughout 2012 and 2013, youth learned to be healthier within the context of their culture. Weekly activities through the Strengthening the Spirit Afterschool program took advantage of the beautiful natural environment of the



rural community with Bike and Paddle the Watershed events. Youth participated in a healthy/non-healthy food scavenger hunt at the local market, using iPads to video items found during the hunt. Youth also participated in weekly preparation and cooking of healthy dinners.

Building on collaborations within their community, the teens partnered with Upward Bound in its community service outreach. The latest project resulted in the creation of an educational nature trail in the backyard of Lakeside Middle School. The trail, completed in 2014, provides better access to the natural area behind the school. The trail is used by multiple classes of Plummer-Worley students during the school day and during the afterschool program. According to Erika Thiel, State EYSC Leader, collaborations are the key to sustaining the EYSC program after the grant. "It is exciting to see youth building on the concepts learned in EYSC by collaborating with local partners on projects, making a lasting difference within their communities."



The youth completed all aspect of the planning and building of the trail, including using GPS to lay it out. Landscaping cloth provided a foundation to prevent weed growth with mulch on top. Large rip rap rock bordered the edges and the youth planted native plants on the sides.

The trail is in high use and provides an opportunity for Native American youth to answer the Surgeon General's challenge in a safe and environmentally healthy way. ■

Oxford Maine Healthier Because of Youth Impact



Oxford County Maine has been designated as the unhealthiest county in Maine by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2010 and 2011 primarily because of low access to healthy food and high rates of food insecurity in a 70 percent low income community. Two years is too long so 4-H youth in the town of Oxford Hills decided to do something about it. As a result of the collaboration between youth, adults and health providers, in 2015, Oxford was ranked the seventh healthiest of all 16 counties in state.

Collaborators achieved success by making access to local foods and nutrition education a priority. Community and school gardens of eight raised beds and a gourd house, 3 Sisters Garden (an ancient Native American method of gardening corn, beans, and squash) and a pumpkin and squash garden provided new sources of fresh food for community harvest dinners and the school cafeteria.

The 55 older youth leaders trained and mentored fifth and sixth grade youth to continue the program's success in the future. They have also maintained a website and focused attention on sharing information and knowledge among all. Older youth also shared their service learning experiences to other school-farm projects in the region during a workshop in 2012 and participated in a statewide conference in 2014.

Today, youth are initiating experiential learning projects in ninth grade to meet

proficiency based graduation requirements at the Bryant Pond 4-H Camp and Learning Center. Now the tremendous strides made in making fresh food accessible in the community have been institutionalized into the educational system, making this a sustainable effort through the engagement of teens.

This was a project of the University of Maine. ■



Maryland Trains in EYSC Model

Chris Anderson, Principal Investigator for the University of Maryland's Engaging Youth Serving Community (EYSC) Program, trained all Maryland 4-H faculty and staff in the power of the Community Capital Model and the Youth Participatory Evaluation Toolkit at an all-day staff training as part of the annual Maryland Extension Conference. Anderson has been an active promoter of this program at previous National Association of Extension 4-HA (NAE4-HA) and Galaxy Conferences on a national basis. His presentation included the

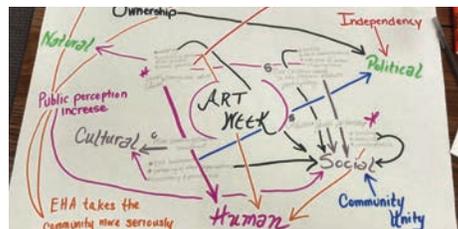


basics of the Community Capital Model and shared the results of using the Asset Mapping Tool included in the toolkit.

Maryland has used all of the components of the Youth Participatory Toolkit throughout its four years with the EYSC program.

- Local leadership teams used Project Progress Check-Up Sheet in early community leadership trainings to assess project progress at pre-determined steps: Issue Discovery and Action Project Identification, Action Project Planning and Action Project Implementation, What Happens Next and End of Project Evaluation.
- All five initial Maryland EYSC communities utilized the Story Boarding tool during the first statewide training for local leadership teams to help the groups focus on their community and better understand community needs.

- The Community Mapping tool was very effective at the conclusion to help communities hone in on expected outcomes, learn about other potential anticipated outcomes and offer insight into the broader potential impacts of their respective projects. ■



Milo, Maine EYSC Achieves Sustainability Through School Credit



The Milo EYSC team developed a community garden to address the issue of food insecurity and to give teens and tweens in this small Maine town a new after school activity. Based on the success of EYSC over the past four years through HAWT Spot (Have a Wonderful Time), the 35 youth and 3 adults partnering with them turned their attention to learning to grow fresh and healthier food.

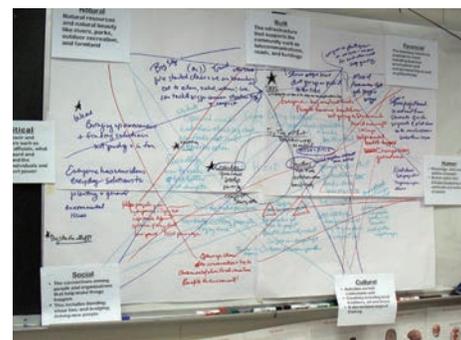
But that reached new levels when the local school began offering a youth-initiated academic choice for a mandated third science credit requirement called Horticulture. Youth in

the class experienced the local food systems cycle from earth to table by creating their own research study and journaling and presenting about their accomplishments to younger students. During the year's course, youth gained public speaking skills, new knowledge about cooking chemistry, nutrition and exercise biology, botany, and harvesting. Two classes (Art and Jobs for Maine Graduates) were inspired by this project - they not only gave the Horticulture class a \$500 check, but also partnered in fundraiser selling "Empty Bowls" (hand-thrown pottery filled with healthy soup made by students) for donations to the local food pantry at a community wellness day.

One student said: "It is exciting to come from a place that was so hands-on and focused on sustainability, agriculture, nutrition and so much more, to a place that never has really been any of those things but that is constantly changing and willing to grow if it means there are people to put in the work. That's what I love about this

class...I know that in my future, I will be doing some sort of work with agriculture whether it be working on a farm nearby or one day owning my own and I know that the stuff I learned from this class...will forever be knowledge that I will use and apply to real life situations on that farm."

This project was part of the University of Maine's Engaging Youth, Serving Community program coordinated by County 4-H Agent Barbara Baker. ■



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 (NIFA) 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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