

# 4-H Power of Youth

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

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## 4-H Youth Positively Impact Communities

4-H's *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* Year 6 (EYSC6) program awarded 12 land-grant institutions in 11 states funding to implement and evaluate youth-facilitated community issues forums with action plans. EYSC6 continued work started with EYSC4 and EYSC5. Results in year 6 continue to impress:

- Nearly 1,000 youth in 59 targeted rural communities participated in local leadership teams with 750 adults. Forty six percent of the youth were new participants.
- These youth-adult partnership teams engaged over 8,000 additional youth and adults to implement action plans to solve priority community issues.
- Youth volunteered a total of 27,000 hours. Using the Independent Sector Index value of \$19.51 per hour of volunteer time, this represents \$526,770 of in-kind support.
- Participants represented diverse populations, with 13 percent black, 14 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent Native American.
- They collaborated with nearly 600 partners to identify and solve community issues, including government agencies, school systems and community organizations.
- Grant money was leveraged 14:1 through cash and in-kind support.

The EYSC program is funded through the Rural Youth Development Program (RYD) provided by NIFA at USDA through National 4-H Council. USDA's national collaborative partners in the RYD Grant Program are 4-H, FFA, and Girls Scouts of the USA. ■

## Wisconsin County Gets TORPEDOED

When a referendum in Florence County, Wisc., nearly closed the county's public schools, youth in *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* (EYSC) a community grant program through NIFA and National 4-H Council, decided to show the town the value of their community service. Through the TORPEDOS Program conducted at the local high school supported by EYSC funding, youth demonstrated the potential void that would exist if they were sent to other county school systems up to two hours away.



Students assist with a county reforestation project by pruning and sorting over 150,000 trees.

Under the leadership of the University of Wisconsin Extension, the EYSC team began a four year program that encouraged young people to step in and step up whenever they were needed in their schools and communities. And they did.

The Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority gave a \$5,000 grant to the high school's Building Trades class in support of the youth's exterior work on the homes of elderly, low-income or disabled homeowners. Their repairs even included building ramps to improve accessibility for residents. They later followed up on these skills by building a fishing pier at a local lake and making playground improvements at a county park.

Afterschool, a student-to-student tutoring program was launched by the youth in collaboration with the local elementary school. High school students also hosted an outdoor adventure for the middle school students, and led a food, fun and fitness activity for people of all ages, from youth to the elderly.

Additional youth participated in the "Bobcats Making a Difference" campaign. Students volunteered their time in yard work or other outdoor services requested by county residents. A grant from the Dickinson Area Community Foundation provided t-shirts to identify the youth at work as "Bobcats Making a Difference."

The students joined Fighting Against Corporate Tobacco (FACT) to educate the state legislature and testify at public hearings against public smoking in their town. They also painted murals as part of their beautification project with messages of peace in remembrance of students who were killed, and assisted with a county reforestation project by pruning and sorting over 150,000 trees.

"Five years ago, if we asked, they would do something like come to the community center and sing, but this was all their doing," said one community member of the youth's work. "Independently thinking and doing from the heart."

The group has grown from just seven to over 60 teens who feel empowered to help their community. The TORPEDOES are living out the 4-H Pledge and have successfully accomplished the goal of creating positive changes in their community. ■

# Rural Youth Build Community Capital, Improve Their World

The Community Capital Model developed at the North Central Rural Development Center at Iowa State University is part of the evaluation model for the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* project administered by National 4-H Council. There are six community capitals in the model: human, social, natural, cultural, political, and financial/built. This model can be used to demonstrate the impact of community issues work in EYSC communities, especially in work conducted over time.

The youth and adult teams identify a problem in their community they wish to impact, and implement a project corresponding to one or more community capitals. Although they focus on one area, all projects are designed to enhance human capital which involves acquiring

## ENGAGING *Youth,* SERVING *Community*

the knowledge and skills to emerge as leaders, and social capital which involves developing trust, networks and collaborations.

Evaluation reports of the program indicate that it is achieving the goal of developing human and social capital. The evaluation system implemented by Mississippi State University shows there is a statistically significant increase in leadership skills

gained by youth and adults who participate in these projects.

Participants in the program offer their own observations on the young people who are becoming valued and trusted stakeholders in their communities.

"I am glad that youth have been doing all of this," said one participant. "Everybody's working together for the greater good." ■

## EYSC Youth Continue to Develop Rural Communities



(top) Teens build a park for the Trenton community on an unused parcel of land.

(bottom) Youth hosted an official ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the park.

In 2005, Todd County, Ky., 4-H members completed the clean-up of a local park during EYSC3, where they picked up litter, painted bathrooms and installed new benches and tables to make it a more inviting place for families. It was a positive contribution to the community, so when the opportunity opened up for the Trenton community to be engaged in EYSC5 in 2007, the teens and adults didn't hesitate.

Under the leadership of their County 4-H Agent, Lee Ann McCuiston and Dr. Ken Jones from the University of Kentucky, the team tackled a project that took a lot of dedication and two years to complete. They built a family-friendly park from the unused marshy ground up for the 419 residents in Trenton.

To get started, the youth conducted a community forum with enthusiastic residents to test their ideas. One of the most excited was the mayor of Trenton, who was involved in the project from beginning to

end. The 4-H teens also gave presentations to encourage additional support and in-kind donations from community partners.

For this project, a partnership with faith-based organizations, the local corrections department, parks and recreation, city hall, and the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service was formed. These organizations provided labor to build a swing set, climbing dome and slide, all using raw materials. They also added picnic tables and benches along the nature trail.

This fall, the youth hosted an official ribbon-cutting ceremony to open the park for the community to enjoy. This is the first youth-oriented park in the Trenton area, and is a safe and inviting place for families.

The teens are now working with local officials on potentially revitalizing another green space in the county, and developing more facilities so that families will have more safe places to play and be physically active. ■

## EYSC Partnership Blooms in Landscape Project

The Blackfeet, Mont., 4-H Archery Club and the Blackfeet Community College (BFCC) EYSC Core Training Team serve as the perfect model of how the partnership of youth and adults in the EYSCó grant works to make positive changes in the community.

The two groups joined together for a tree planting project at Eagle Shield Senior Citizen Center. The Archery Project Leaders planned the logistics for the event including landscaping and gathering needed materials, and contacted the appropriate officials for approval.

The project received generous support from the community. The Blackfeet Tribal

Environmental Department donated leftover seedling trees from an Arbor Day event, and the Blackfeet Housing Authority donated needed tools. Billman's Home Improvement Store made a donation of 16 bags of potting soil.

The event was successful, and the youth enjoyed the project and took pride that their efforts helped improve the scenery of the Senior Citizen Center.

The Blackfeet 4-H Archery Club members belong to 4-H clubs in the five communities that are part of the EYSC Blackfeet Community College Rural Youth Development Grant. Through this project,



*A Blackfeet 4-H Archery Club member participates in a tree planting project at Eagle Shield Senior Citizen Center in Montana.*

youth gained a better understanding of the EYSCó grant, and left with ideas that they could take back to their respective clubs. ■

## Texas 4-H Youth Board Making a Difference in the Lives of Young People



*Polk County, Texas youth with Department of Public Service pilots at a day camp on the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation.*

As part of their *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project, the Polk County, Texas 4-H Youth Board organized a day camp on the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation. Over 100 youth attended the two-day event which facilitated team-building and leadership skill development for 4-H youth.

To host the day camp, the Youth Board worked with the Department of Public Safety (DPS), Texas Forest Service, and Texas Parks and Wildlife.

The 4-H Youth Board met with youth at the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation and shared Extension-led programs on foods and nutrition, character education and community service. A county-wide 4-H event on the Reservation held in conjunction with the Tribal Council also helped promote cultural understanding of the people of the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation.

The camp included workshops and activities on Forest Fires, Healthy Snacking, DPS Career Opportunities, Agricultural Animals, Wildlife and Team Building activities.

In addition to the group success at camp, youth enjoyed individual achievement as well. A 17-year-old at the Reservation was struggling to find a way to attend college and wanted to get involved

in DPS programs. One camp program was hosted by DPS helicopter pilots, who helped guide the student on how to get into the program. One pilot was also a Native American and let the student know about available grants to fund college education.

The 4-H Youth Board helps plan and implement the county 4-H program with adult volunteers and Extension staff, and serves as an equal partner with the adults. The EYSC project focuses on the development of youth governance boards within each of the targeted counties as part of a larger statewide program to build youth governance in all 254 Texas counties.

This program was part of the Texas AgriLife Extension EYSCó project targeting five rural communities where youth-adult teams worked together to build community capital. Members include eight diverse youth and adult members of the Polk County Youth Board reflective of the diversity of the greater community of Caucasian, African-American and American Indian populations. ■

## 4-H Youth Help Bring Hollywood to Town

When 4-H members from DeQueen, Ark., began their work in alcohol prevention education in 2005 as part of the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project, little did they know that their work would result four years later in a new amphitheatre in their small Arkansas town of 6,000 people.

With the help of the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, under the leadership of county Extension Educator Terrie James, the 4-H youth-adult community team conducted a needs assessment for their town by evaluating data from a CDC Youth Behavioral Risk Survey and County Profile information from the US Census. They also interviewed high school teachers and prevention resource coordinators, and discovered an alarming statistic: In 2005, Sevier County – home to DeQueen – had a 28.3 percent underage drinking rate, with a 19.2 percent binge drinking rate.

The team collaborated with additional community groups, drawing in eight government agencies and four community

organizations to form the County Coalition on Substance Abuse. They facilitated a Town Hall Meeting, coordinated a youth workshop using Health Rocks!® curricula, and worked on organizing a multi-county youth retreat on prevention training.

The youth decided to host a fun day as an alternative to drinking. During the event, the youth worked with the Project Hope community group and local churches to survey 775 youth and parents to determine exactly what people would like to see added to the community to help prevent drinking. The results indicated that over half of the students polled thought a movie theatre would be a nice addition to the town.

Because the cost to build a theater was high, the group received a grant for equipment to host movies in the park and held several screenings of popular movies. The events were successful and well-attended.

Town officials were so pleased by the youth's work, they applied for a grant to



(top) Youth facilitating a Town Hall Meeting.



(bottom) 4-H youth building an amphitheater.

build an \$800,000 amphitheater to hold concerts, theater productions, cultural activities, and other community events.

The hard work of the DeQueen youth made their dream of an amphitheater a reality. ■

## EYSC Shows Positive Results

Since its implementation in 2006 under the Rural Youth Development Program, the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* project has been well on its way to realizing its vision of "youth building strong communities." A key component of the project is to help youth in rural areas develop leadership and life skills, so they can create successful partnerships with adults to improve the quality of their lives and communities.

Evaluation data for EYSC6 shows that the impact of EYSC4 and EYSC5 became even stronger with the additional leadership opportunities that came through the third year of funding. Survey results from

over 750 youth and adults on community leadership teams in 11 states showed marked improvements to their leadership skill levels. Half of those surveyed were first time participants in the program which demonstrates that returning participants also continued to hone their skills in subsequent years.

In the survey, 16 skills were measured and the leadership skills showing the most improvement, by an increase of 73 percent between pre-tests and posttests, were the abilities to:

- organize a group activity;
- lead group discussions;
- speak before a group;

- plan programs; and
- evaluate programs.

These were also the most improved skills under the previous year's EYSC5 evaluation.

Additional improved leadership skills were:

- following a process to make decisions,
- identifying resources,
- teaching others,
- keeping written records,
- sharing new ideas with others,
- organize information,
- see things objectively,
- work as a team member,
- meet with others,
- relate to people from other cultures and backgrounds, and
- establish time-use priorities.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2005-45201-03332, Amendment 2.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



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A full copy of the EYSC6 evaluation can be found on the Rural Youth Development page at <http://4-H.org/d/Pages/Layouts/ruralityouthdevelopment.html>. ■