

4-H Power of YOUTH

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

Rural 4-H Youth, Adults Continue Increase in Leadership Skills

"Youth build strong communities" is the longitudinal vision for the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project now in its eighth year of funding under the Rural Youth Development Program. A core underpinning of the project is to help youth develop leadership and life skills so they can work successfully in partnership with adults to improve their rural communities.

Evaluation data for twelve EYSC8 states determined that the impact shown since the initial year of the youth-facilitated public issues forum model in 2006 became even stronger with the additional leadership opportunities provided. Surveys of 719 youth and adults on community leadership teams in 60 rural communities showed statistically significant improvements to their skill level compared with scores prior to participating. Approximately half were first time participants in the program which shows that previous participants continued to hone their skills in subsequent years.

Of the 16 skills measured, the leadership skills showing the most improvement in mean scores between pretest and posttest were the abilities to:

- organize a group activity (71%)
- plan programs (70%)
- evaluate programs (70%)
- lead group discussions (70%), and
- speak before a group (67%).

These were the five skills most improved under the EYSC7 evaluation as well.

A full copy of the EYSC8 evaluation can be found on the Rural Youth Development page at <http://www.4-h.org/youth-development-programs/citizenship-youth-engagement/community-action/rural-youth/>. ■

Engaged Youth Serving Veterans in Kitsap County

While pounding nails for new benches and cleaning up a community garden, Ben Case never dreamed the impact would be so far reaching. The 17-year-old Bremerton 4-H'er, along with a group of dedicated Kitsap County youth, is discovered using their "hands for larger service" is impacting their hearts and perceptions of those who came before them.

Over the last year, the teens and adults volunteers spent time after school and on Saturdays helping beautify the landscape at the Retsil Veterans Home near Port Orchard. Working closely with many of the residents, youth built benches, picnic tables, and planted flowers so those who lived there could have a pleasant place to enjoy the view of Puget Sound.

"The veterans have seen so much and given a lot to our country," Case, who plans to serve in the Navy, said. "It's an eye opener for kids my age to get to know them and understand selflessness."

As part of an *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* grant, the project focuses on developing youth leadership and life skills while working in partnership with adults to improve local communities. The EYSC projects are focused on developing human and social community capital in these rural communities of less than 10,000 population.

"Our youth are learning about taking responsibility and how giving back can affect people's lives," said Kelly Fisk, Washington State University Cooperative Extension, Kitsap County 4-H. "It's exciting to watch them discover how their empathy and generosity bridges generational differences. The seniors are showing youth how important this interaction is to social and emotional health."

4-H'ers are also bonding with residents by creating individual biographies. Through one-on-one interviews youth are discovering where and when the veterans served, what their interests are and how their lives were impacted by military involvement. Special plaques with personalized information will be hung outside veterans' doors to honor each resident.

Recently, the Kitsap County group decided to expand their involvement with the Retsil Veterans Home. In coming months youth will create care packages for current members of the military. The 4-H'ers and seniors will fill bags with playing cards, Frisbees, hand wipes, snacks and other items from home.

"It's very fulfilling to do this," Case said. "I'm coming back as an adult and building relationships for a lifetime." ■



Ben Case, member of Bremerton 4-H, takes a moment with a resident of the Retsil Veterans Home. Case and other Kitsap County Youth made a positive impact on the veterans' home.

4-H Youth Partner to Solve Community Problems



A 4-H member explains the importance of healthy living during a community event. Youth leadership teams were instrumental in reaching members of 60 rural communities through EYSC8.

4-H's *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* year 8 (EYSC8) program awarded grants to 12 land-grant universities and colleges in 11 states to develop, implement, and evaluate youth-facilitated community-based issues forums with action plans in rural communities.

For eight of these Extension Service programs, EYSC8 completed the work that started four years earlier in a longitudinal

effort of funding the same communities. Four new land-grant universities started to engage in this youth in governance program model beginning a new longitudinal cohort. Results in this eighth year continue to be impressive:

- 849 youth in 60 targeted rural communities participated on state and local leadership teams. They partnered with 302 adults to develop youth-adult partnerships.
- These leadership teams engaged an additional 2,128 youth and adults to implement action plans to solve priority community issues.
- Approximately 35 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.
- They provided a total of 67,259 volunteer hours. Using the Independent Sector Index value of \$20.85 per hour of volunteer time, there was more than

\$1.4 million provided in in-kind support.

- Sixteen percent of the participants represented Black, Native American, Asian and mixed race populations.
- They collaborated to solve community issues with nearly 200 partners, including government agencies, school systems and community organizations. These groups brought an additional 1,500 youth and 890 adults into the program.
- Grant money was leveraged \$7.02 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 . ■

EYSC Programs Show Community Change



4-H Youth volunteers from Iron County, Wis., pose during one of their community events promoting healthy living.

Youth choosing healthier foods and exercising more, revamped parks where families can come together, children having food to eat when school is out, an alcohol-free night at the county fair to encourage young families to join are just a few of the impacts of *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* action projects implemented in 39 rural communities across the nation.

Evaluation reports also show increased leadership skills acquired by EYSC youth and

adults. Cooperative Extension Services in seven states (Del., Fla., Idaho, Ky., Neb., Texas, and Wis.) have been able to sustain these projects in tough economic times through public-private partnerships, leveraging Federal funding, and the systemic implementation of best practices acquired through this program.

Using the Community Capitals Model of assessing change in rural communities, these 39 issue-based action plans enhanced

human and social capitals in all projects, and selected projects developed financial, natural, cultural, built, and political capital for the beneficiaries.

In its fifth year of implementation, EYSC has brought youth to the table as equal partners in community and economic development. This success is evident in the "Observation of Outcomes" survey by Mississippi State University. This survey of open-ended questions was administered to 142 youth and adults at the conclusion of the EYSC8 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 ■

EYSC Youth Step Up to Environmental Challenge

Bryant Pond is one of Maine's hundreds of lakes and ponds suffering from milfoil infestation, a weed-like growth found in fresh water that negatively impacts fishing, swimming and clean drinking water.

University of Maine, Oxford County Extension Educator Susan Jennings is leading more than 200 students at the 4-H Camp & Learning Center in using technology and public outreach efforts to identify and prevent invasive species in their region.

Students are building submersible robots to find specific milfoil growth areas in the water. They design and build the robots, and control them remotely underwater. Using a video camera, the robot records what it finds during searches. The 4-H'ers have learned to identify the invasive plants and mark them using GPS technology.

When the local lake association received a \$40,000 grant, it was able to purchase a pontoon boat with a vacuum system the team used to help remove milfoil they

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4-H'er Maya Critchfield poses with her underwater robot used to detect milfoil, an invasive plant found on the bottom of Maine's lakes and ponds.

found and tracked. In the more difficult spots, they used tarps weighted with rebar to block sunlight and control the plant's growth.

"I was making a real difference in my own community," 4-H'er Mariah Millett said. "It also made me want to learn more, do more."

Mariah's efforts have helped save the local fish and plant life, improve water quality, and begin to save Maine's \$2 billion annual tourism and recreational boating economy. As a project funded by an *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* grant, this project is developing human, social, natural and financial capital in a very rural community. ■

Rural Youth Build Community Capitals

Part of the evaluation model for the *Engaging Youth, Serving Community* project led by National 4-H Council has been the Community Capital Model developed at the North Central Rural Development Center at Iowa State University. This model can be used to articulate the impact of sustained longitudinal work within communities. There are six community capitals in the model: human, social, natural, cultural, political, and financial/built.

The various EYSC projects implemented in the communities address different capitals according to the issues that the youth and adult teams are working to impact. All projects will enhance human and social capital by the overall design of this project. Human capital involves acquiring the knowledge and skills to emerge as leaders and social capital works with developing trust, networks and collaborations. The formal evaluation of this program

implemented by Mississippi State University indicates that the goal of developing human and social capital is being achieved. Here are examples of this accomplishment:

- *There is a statistically significant increase in acquisition of 16 leadership skills by the youth and adults engaged as partners in these projects.*
- *Increases in collaborations at the community level show networking and trust-building.*
- *Quotes such as this offer anecdotal evidence that youth are becoming valued and trusted stakeholders in their communities:*
 - o *"We didn't do this alone. It takes youth and adults and everyone in balance to make a difference."*
 - o *"I am glad that youth have been*



A 4-H member from Iron County, Wis., leads local youth in an outdoor day, sponsored by the county 4-H program.

doing all of this. Everybody's working together for the greater good."

- o *"It's cool to see everything; how we have had a big impact." ■*



4-H'ers in New Hampton, Iowa, with their new community greenhouse.

Communities in Three States Tackle Food Insecurity, Nutrition

Engaging Youth, Serving Community leadership teams work within their rural communities to determine the top community issue through youth-facilitated public forums. These issues are addressed with action plans to improve the community over several years of work.

With the new cohort starting under *EYSC8*, food insecurity and nutrition were selected as priority issues in nine communities in Missouri, Iowa and Maine. Poverty is prevalent in each of these sites with up to 90 percent of the school youth receiving free or reduced federal lunch.

In New Hampton, Iowa, a close collaboration between 4-H and FFA has resulted in a new hoop greenhouse and a traditional power ventilated greenhouse. Vegetables were grown that were used in tasting sessions in local elementary schools with nutrition lessons taught by 4-H members, as well as fresh food for local school cafeterias and concession stands. A boost to this project came through the FFA's selection as an America's Farmers Grow Communities award winner, which resulted in \$2,500 donated by Monsanto for each of two years

of this project. A third greenhouse is planned for the future. This project is coordinated through the Allamakee County Agriculture Extension District of Iowa State University.

Greenfield, Mo., also worked with the local FFA Chapter and Public Health Department to address hunger. In the first year 80 youth were the recipients of weekend backpack meals through the "Brown Bag Buddies" program, and snacks offered after school to an additional 35 youth in a tutoring program. Community donations allowed the project to continue, including a church who pledged \$100 a month. In the second year, the project expanded to a 10-bed community garden through a partnership with the Dade County Health Department. Thirteen families received more than 96 pounds of fresh vegetables. This project is planned to expand in the third year by offering food preservation classes for the fresh produce and further collaborations with the Master Gardeners in the addition of a portable greenhouse at the elementary school. This program is led through University of Missouri Cooperative Extension of Dade County.

Bethel, Maine features a close partnership between the 4-H project "Got Farms" and the public schools, with other components reaching into the community. "Got Farms has become a leader impacting other Farm to School projects in Maine," Susan Jennings, Extension Educator with the University of Maine, said. "They have shown others that a small amount of money can make a difference."

The Bethel core community youth and adult partnership focused on educating the public about local foods through the creation of eight raised organic garden beds. The project also included a greenhouse renovation and a youth-powered bicycle that charges the battery that lights the greenhouse. The vegetables have also been used in the schools, providing colorful salads and veggie snacks.

In each case, these *EYSC* youth are working with their respective land grant universities Cooperative Extension Service, learning leadership skills while they make a daily difference for their peers.

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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