OJJDP recognizes mentoring success during 4-H Congressional Breakfast

National 4-H Council hosted its first annual Congressional Breakfast on April 9, 2014 in Washington, DC to celebrate 4-H, the largest youth development organization in the U.S. The program highlighted 4-H’s countless successes over the years, including the mentoring relationships 4-H mentees have built with mentors through the National Mentoring Program, made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In front of Members of Congress, corporate sponsors, government agencies, university representatives and 4-H youth and adults, Robert Listenbee, Administrator of OJJDP, made note of the accomplishments 4-H has achieved under this program.

“4-H mentoring programs are opening up a world of possibilities for young people across our nation,” Listenbee said to an audience of more than 250 people. “4-H uses OJJDP funds to expand its mentoring outreach and build sustainable progress. It’s an investment in America’s youth and our future, and it’s an investment that we are proud to make.”

In addition to Listenbee’s remarks, the program featured presentations from 4-H President and CEO Jennifer Sirangelo, 4-H youth, and Members of Congress who are 4-H alumni. Some of the most memorable interactions of the morning were the stories told by 4-H youth, their mentors, and their mentoring program coordinators, all who had the opportunity to sit with their U.S. Representatives and Senators during the event. It was a unique opportunity for Congressional members to meet 4-H’ers from their home states and hear about the importance of the OJJDP National Mentoring Program directly from those impacted, like Ashley Blake. A high school student in Elkton, Maryland, Blake recently began a 4-H club in her community after being a mentee in the Tech Wizards program. The support from 4-H staff and her mentoring experience inspired her to share the 4-H experience for other youth in her community. Now the head of the 4-H club in Rudy Park, Blake told guests at her table that she might have never realized this leadership opportunity had it not been for the opportunity made available to her local 4-H through the OJJDP National Mentoring Program.

“I’m amazed at where 4-H can take you,” Blake said.

To see photos from the Congressional Breakfast, go to http://www.4-h.org/congressionalbreakfastphotos.
Since 2010, National 4-H Council has implemented the 4-H National Mentoring Program (NMP) to expand and enhance mentoring services for youth most in need across the country. This project is supported by an award from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as part of OJJDP’s national effort to strengthen, expand, and implement youth mentoring activities for millions of young Americans. The 4-H National Mentoring Program provides funding to land-grant universities (LGUs) in 46 states to reach underserved, at-risk, and high-risk youth, with the goals of increasing family relationships, academic success, and social competency.

Implementation of the 4-H NMP Year 4 began on February 1, 2014. To kick off the new year, sub-awardees gathered in Chevy Chase, Maryland for grantees training. Over the course of 4 days, program staff learned about recruitment, sustainability, and tracking of the mentor/mentee relationships, as well as guidelines for implementation of three evidence-based replication programs: 4-H Youth and Families with Promise (YFP), Tech Wizards, and Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE). It wasn’t all work and no play, program staff took a break and went on a nighttime tour around Washington, DC. Staff ended the week armed with knowledge and new ideas for implementation of their mentoring programs. Year 4 is off to a great start and we have no doubt you are keeping youth at heart in your programs.

**Maryland Extension mobilizes Tech Wizards in Cecil County**

Sitting 50 miles south of Philadelphia and 60 miles north of Baltimore, Elkton, Maryland—the county seat of Cecil County—remains geographically isolated. It’s a town with little accessible public transportation, a high percentage of low-income housing residents, and limited opportunities for youth to participate in community-based activities. Enter Vicki Stone, a 4-H youth development program assistant with the University of Maryland Extension in Cecil County. Stone and her team have a simple yet powerful purpose: to provide unimaginable outcomes for 4-H youth. “I want to make a difference in this community, Stone said. “I want to inspire and to seek for people opportunities they didn’t think existed for themselves.”

In Cecil County, there are few traditional family units. Most people in the community don’t have access to the technology that is considered commonplace—mobile phones, computers, laptops, printers, and digital cameras for example. After surveying her community to understand that youth and adults alike wanted to learn more about digital media, Stone reached out to Dr. Lisa Dennis, the 4-H youth development specialist in Princess Anne, Maryland. Together, they partnered with the Elkton Housing Authority to implement the Tech Wizards mentoring program in the Rudy Park and Windsor Village communities. Through this program, Cecil County provides a safe environment where mentees and their mentors can learn about computers, digital photography, video production, and other forms of technology they may not otherwise be able to access.

In its first year of OJJDP funding, the Cecil County team built a mobile technology lab that brings this world to different communities in Elkton. Complete with laptops, projectors, printers, and digital cameras, the lab allows mentees and mentors to participate in fun, educational, and engaging science-related activities. The county expanded its reach in Year 2 by using the funding to add a second mobile technology lab and place permanent technology labs in community centers throughout the county. Most recently mentees and mentors have used the mobile technology labs to create public service announcements (PSAs) focused on the theme “What inspires you?” Through these PSAs, participants have inspired other youth and adults in the community to pursue their interests. But even making the PSA was an achievement for many youth, including one mentee with special needs, who after a year of requiring intensive assistance to complete program activities, produced his PSA on his own with the support of his mentor.

To learn more about the Cecil County Tech Wizards mentoring program, visit their Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/cecilcounty4H](https://www.facebook.com/cecilcounty4H), or find them on YouTube [http://www.youtube.com/user/CecilCounty4H](http://www.youtube.com/user/CecilCounty4H).
Another successful year of the 4-H National Mentoring Program is in the books. As a result of your hard work, we reached 8,797 youth in 47 states and the District of Columbia. All of this would not have been possible without your dedication to growing the 4-H mission.

Here are a few examples of the outstanding work that took place during the NMP 3 program year.

**4-H Tech Wizards:** Michigan State University Extension, Wayne County

4-H youth and their mentors participate in the Tech Wizards mentoring program to capitalize on emerging technology as a way of involving underserved youth and their families in learning basic life and workforce skills. In Year 3, the Michigan State University Extension used funding to participate in two national Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) events. In October, mentees and mentors worked on the 4-H National Youth Science Day experiment, Maps & Apps, for which mentees created and designed their own parks online. Then, in December, these Tech Wizards joined in Computer Science Education Week’s Hour of Code which taught youth to write their own code to generate games and apps. Mentees enjoyed these events so much, they sought out opportunities to code and program throughout the rest of the year.

**4-H YFP:** North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension, Cumberland County

As part of the Youth and Families with Promise (YFP) program, mentees and mentors participate in activities designed to increase mentees’ interpersonal competence, improve their academic performance, and strengthen family relationships. The North Carolina State University Cooperative Extension uses the National Mentoring Program to serve youth on a military base in Cumberland County. In 2013, these mentees won first place in the State Fair 4-H County Exhibit Competition for an exhibit they built with their mentors honoring military family homecomings.

**4-H LIFE:** Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center, St. Landy Parish and East Baton Rouge Parish

The purpose of the 4-H LIFE program is to enhance familial relationships between incarcerated parents, their children, and caregivers. Reaching more than 800 individuals in Year 3, Southern University runs this program in two of Louisiana’s parishes and has reached such consistent results of improving family bonds by implementing thematic programming covering topics such as contentment, optimism, and resiliency. Incarcerated parents learned these skills outside of the monthly family visits so that time could be spent focusing on regaining their role as a parent. Mentees also worked with their mentors outside of the family visits to learn critical communication and decision making skills to help keep them out of the juvenile justice system.
4-H National Mentoring Program Delivers Big Impact Since First OJJDP Award In 2010

The National 4-H Council and the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention have forged and maintained a vital collaboration to provide positive youth development programming and ladders of opportunity for youth in high risk communities. This is being accomplished through the intervention of three evidence-based one-on-one and group mentoring 4-H Programs: 4-H Life, 4-H Tech Wizards, and 4-H Youth and Families with Promise. Since the first OJJDP National Mentoring Grant was awarded to 4-H in 2010, 4-H National Council has compiled and analyzed data on the impact of its programming in the organizations it serves. Since its inception the 4-H National Mentoring Program, funded by OJJDP, has served 31,351 youth and encompassed 8,256 mentors.

The impact since 2010 for each of the three 4-H Programs is detailed below:

4-H Life
Promoting strong, healthy and nurturing family environments for children of incarcerated parents, while helping incarcerated parents become positive role models.

- Reached 1,228 youth to-date
- 571 mentors serving youth, with 95% of mentors being retained during the reporting periods
- 86% of youth reporting an improvement in their family relationships

4-H Tech Wizards
Engaging underserved youth through mentoring in an interactive bi-lingual mentoring program that focuses on science, technology, engineering and math education.

- Reached 16,225 youth to-date
- 3,341 mentors serving youth, with 82% of mentors being retained during the reporting periods
- 72% of youth exhibiting an improvement in their perception of social support

4-H Youth and Families with Promise
Engaging youth, their parents and mentors in a prevention program that targets youth who have below-average school performance, poor social skills and/or weak family bonds.

- Reached 13,898 youth to-date
- 4,297 mentors serving youth, with 92% of mentors being retained during the reporting periods
- 71% of youth exhibiting an improvement in social competence

Thank you Deborah Seward, Gibson County, University of Tennesse; and Vicki Stone, Cecil County, University of Maryland for your submissions to this issue!