

IMPACT

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Idaho 4-H teens continue to TALK!

The Situation

The Idaho 4-H Teen TALK (Teen Ambassador Leadership Kit) Retreat inspires and builds confidence in youth who want to learn how to promote 4-H in their communities, as well as for those who want to plan and organize 4-H events. This annual statewide retreat began in 2009 and was designed to teach teens the life skills they need to promote 4-H in their communities. Young people between the ages of twelve and fourteen tend to leave 4-H unless they are introduced to new challenges and programs. With this in mind, the TALK organizers felt teens would benefit directly from an intensive weekend retreat focusing on communication that was both challenging and fun.

After four years, evaluations strongly indicate a continued need for this type of training and TALK appears to be successfully meeting that need.

Our Response

The TALK Retreat was developed through a partnership between University of Idaho (UI) Extension faculty, 4-H professionals, youth and volunteers. Each of the planning committee members are responsible for teaching a workshop, as well as coordinating other parts of the weekend retreat. All of the housekeeping, cooking and extra activities are lead by adult volunteer chaperones and participating teens. The United Dairymen of Idaho and local community businesses donate food, supplies and educational materials. Guest speakers have included Miss Rodeo Idaho, a local restaurateur, area Police Departments, local independent business owners, county 4-H teen councils, the Albion Historic Museum curator, State 4-H Ambassador youth and UI student interns.



In 2012, forty two teens from across Idaho attended the fourth annual 4-H Teen TALK Retreat. Photo by Jeni Bywater.

TALK is held each March at Campus Grove in Albion, ID. The facility is the former Albion State Normal School and encompasses several acres of lawn and a renovated dormitory. It is now a privately owned retreat center. The location is somewhat isolated and space is limited but the retreat "atmosphere" provides a perfect setting to focus on learning valuable life skills while having fun with other teens from across Idaho.

Teens may attend TALK for two years. Odd numbered years' curriculum focuses on workshops around writing press releases, creating posters and a personality awareness session. Teens who participate on even years attend workshops on event planning, goal setting and interviewing skills. At the end of two years, the teens have a completed binder of information called the Teen Ambassador Leadership Kit. This kit also includes information about photography, basic 4-H information and other materials from

workshops or guest speakers the current year. This “kit” provides teens the tools needed to solve some of the problems they face when promoting and marketing 4-H. Ambassador polo shirts and business cards are also provided. Retreat participants are encouraged to become involved in other community organizations, in addition to 4-H, with active youth and adult partnerships.

Program Outcomes

Twenty-nine teens, representing seven counties throughout Idaho registered for the 2009 TALK Retreat. In 2010, forty-eight teens (the retreat maximum) representing thirteen counties attended and in 2011, forty-eight teens from fifteen counties participated. In 2012 forty-two teens from fourteen counties attended.

Participants are asked to complete evaluations at the end of the retreat each year. In addition, information was gathered using the online tool, Survey Monkey, from both TALK participants and their local county 4-H professionals. The teens were asked about their experience and how they have used the information. The 4-H professionals were asked to determine the ways teens are using the communication skills they learned and the effectiveness of the TALK retreat. Some results from the teen’s Survey Monkey responses include:

- 67% felt they were prepared to go home and promote 4-H on their own
- 83% would ask County 4-H staff if they could help with activities
- 33% were using TALK materials to promote 4-H
- 50% referred to TALK materials to make posters and presentations
- 83% always wore their Ambassador polo shirt when promoting 4-H
- 83% used their Ambassador business cards
- 100% promoted, marketed or helped at a 4-H activity because of attending TALK
- 50% completed county 4-H Leadership projects as a result of attending TALK

The evaluation results indicated youth who attended TALK returned home to help promote 4-H locally and were prepared with the training and materials they received to successfully do so. The local 4-H staff working with the TALK teens are appreciative of the training and felt the teens have gained skills such as confidence, willingness to participate, better knowledge of the 4-H program and the ability to speak in front of people.

The Future

The next 4-H Teen TALK Retreat is scheduled for March 22-24, 2013. Planning committee members anticipate strong attendance again and suggest teens register early to assure attendance. Registration information will be available at the 2012 State 4-H Leaders Forum. Alumni from TALK will staff a display and also be available to answer questions about the retreat.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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