

IMPACT

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The Village Project provides migrant youth with learning opportunities

AT A GLANCE

4-H volunteers participated in the 8-week long Village Project and taught migrant Hispanic youth in areas including nutrition, health, metal work, art, cooking and bicycle safety.

The Situation

Elk Mountain Farms, which is the largest contiguous hop farm in the world, is located 45 minutes north of Bonners Ferry, Idaho. Every summer migrant Hispanic farmworkers come to work on the farm, bringing their families with them. The adults work on the farm during the day, leaving the children unsupervised for long periods of time. In the summer of 2015, there were 22 youth ages 6 to 16 residing in the apartments at Elk Mountain Farms.

Our Response

Barbara Castellan, a community member, approached Amy Robertson, an Extension educator, and asked if the 4-H program would help develop a program at Elk Mountain Farms to provide the youth with structured learning opportunities during this unsupervised time. Working together, they co-founded the Village Project. Eleven adult volunteers were recruited for the project and all the volunteers went through the 4-H Volunteer Screening process. Each volunteer taught in their own area of expertise, including metal work as illustrated in the photo. Most volunteers taught at least once per week during the 8-week long program that ran from the beginning of July to the end of August.

Program Outcomes

Cumulatively, the Village Project provided migrant youth with approximately 90 hours of hands-on



Weezil Samter teaches Village Project youth how to create jewelry and original artwork out of copper using hand tools.

learning opportunities. Robertson taught a nutrition and health curriculum entitled “Choose Health: Food, Fun, and Fitness” (CHFFF). Other volunteers gave instruction in metal craft, language arts, beading, bicycle safety, soccer, cooking and visual arts. For the health and nutrition curriculum, approximately 90% of participants reported that they had incorporated at least one new healthy behavior, such as reading a nutrition label, drinking more water, and eating more fruits or vegetables. During the project, the majority of the children reported participating in physical activities when no volunteers were present. These activities included soccer, basketball, bike riding and physical activity games learned in CHFFF.

At the end of program, a picnic was held to celebrate the project and thank the volunteers. Many of the youth participants and their families also attended. The children made thank-you gifts for the volunteers and proudly presented them at this event. During the

picnic, the youth participants were overheard expressing thoughts such as, "I wish you could keep coming to teach us," and "I can't wait to show my friends what I learned and/or made!" Volunteers for the project also had positive comments such as, "I really enjoyed teaching the children" and "I plan to come back next year."



Cheryl Russell helps Village Project youth create original artwork using beads.

The Future

Both program participants and volunteers celebrated the Village Project as a huge success; therefore, program coordinators plan to make this an annual event. They are working on strategies to increase the number of volunteers involved next year as well as increase the number of hours of guided instruction.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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