

Facilitation Coach volunteers fulfill a need in the county 4-H program

AT A GLANCE

Creating a new type of volunteer position has allowed our 4-H program to meet the growing needs of our community and offers new roles for volunteers with more responsibility.

The Situation

As our 4-H program grows, we as Extension staff cannot continue to add new programs to our current workload or continue to use the processes we have always used and so we need to learn to work with volunteers in new ways. There is a limited number of volunteers that Extension staff can supervise and work with effectively. Simply recruiting more volunteers isn't always the answer, we need to change how we work with volunteers. In Canyon County, we have identified program areas that have outgrown our current structure and created new volunteer position descriptions that serve as Facilitation Coaches to other volunteers to address our needs.

Our Response

Our response to one of these growing needs is to offer short term projects that can be completed in six weeks or less and along with this new type of programming, create a volunteer position titled Facilitation Coach to manage the process. From our day camp program, parents have requested longer term involvement for their children although not the length of commitment necessary to be enrolled in a traditional 4-H club. From our traditional club program we hear that project volunteers are more willing to commit to a shorter term of giving their time and expertise.

We started with three Facilitation Coach volunteers who would in turn coach project volunteers in a



Home Arts Facilitation Coach assists project volunteer with baking project meeting plans.

given project area to plan and deliver projects in a limited time frame. Within the timeframe, youth will complete all project requirements and be ready to present their record books to an interview evaluation judge and display their final exhibit.

We developed position descriptions for each Facilitation Coach, provided training to help them understand their role, and provided resources for them to recruit project volunteers in their project area. Each Facilitation Coach agreed to either a one year or two year term. After the first year, we will request a two year term allowing for half of the Facilitation Coaches to rotate in and out of the positions each year. For the Facilitation Coaches to be successful we established a clear understanding that communication was key with the Extension office so we can help with challenges as they came up and offer resources to help them in their volunteer role.

Program Outcomes

In the spring of 2014, we recruited three volunteers as Facilitation Coaches. After training, they in turn recruited six project volunteers to deliver four projects reaching 30 youth. All four projects were completed between February and the second week in April. In the fall of 2014, we recruited a fourth Facilitation Coach and was able to offer an additional project area in both the Fall and Spring for a total of nine projects reaching 64 youth who completed their 4-H projects in six weeks.

An evaluation sent to parents of the first cohort group tells us that this program structure meets their family needs, offering just the right length of commitment and confirmed the quality of programming on the part of the project volunteers. An evaluation sent to the project volunteers of the first cohort group tells us that the level of support from the Facilitation Coach was about right. There was also an unwritten implication that perhaps they did not fully understand the role of the Facilitation Coach. From the Extension Office, we worked to better communicate their role to the project volunteers when they sought information from our office rather than the Facilitation Coach for both the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 round of projects.

The Future

The Facilitation Coach model has been shared with other counties in Idaho and adopted by Jerome County to work with families new to 4-H. In Canyon County we will be developing a Facilitation Coach position to work with placing new families in traditional 4-H clubs, bridging the gap between the initial interest of a new family to assuring their connection and involvement with an established 4-H club. We see this as a very positive move forward to assure a higher enrollment rate of new families and value the time and expertise of a Facilitation Coach to bridge this gap.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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