

## 4-H Food Smart Families: Implementation in two states' diverse settings

### AT A GLANCE

**4-H Food Smart Families program reaches limited-resource youth and families with nutrition education.**

### The Situation

With funding from National 4-H Council and ConAgra Foundation, the 4-H Food Smart Families (4-HFSF) program was piloted in five states. These states were tasked with providing ten hours of nutrition education, reaching 2,500 youth, incorporating Teens as Teachers. Offering 2 capstone family events, using an evidence-based curriculum, and collaborating with 4-H Youth Development and Family and Consumer Sciences partners was also required.

Idaho implemented "Up for the Challenge: Lifetime Fitness, Healthy Decisions; a 4-H/Army Youth Development Project" by University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, while Delaware utilized "Choose Health, Food, Fun and Fitness" by Cornell Cooperative Extension for their curriculums.

### Our Response

With Idaho's rural, high Hispanic population, the need to offer unique ways to reach clientele and encouraging them to be receptive to information being shared is crucial. For this reason, programming was mostly administered at centralized locations where these previously not-served audiences lived or already frequented as collective groups. Delaware, with an urban-based population, has a large underserved African American demographic, necessitating the 4-HFSF program be easily accessible in urban centers. Through examination of these underserved



A teen trainer demonstrates an activity to peer participants.

audiences, both states partnered with family and consumer sciences staff that recognized the need to provide recipes in the programming that would utilize foods already familiar to participants. In Idaho, several Latino-based recipes were incorporated into the cooking skills activities and in Delaware many recipes included ingredients that were shelf-stable. Idaho and Delaware also worked to ensure recipes would use minimal ingredients, and were economical, low-fat, low-sodium, low-sugar and easily available.

The two states found incorporating Teens as Teachers was a great technique to teach the younger participants. Not only were younger participants more receptive to the information being shared, but trained Teens as Teachers provided valuable feedback from a youth perspective. Their input strengthened the quality of the lessons delivered. Using Teens as Teachers expanded the program reach, allowing more attendees to engage in the learning activities. Capstone

events were held at multiple locations to encourage family involvement.

### Program Outcomes

The 4-H Common Measures (CM) system, based on the national logic model was used for data analysis. Through the 4-H CM youth survey, both states were able to show participant knowledge increase and behavior change. Pre- and post-surveys showed an increase in knowledge and behavior change in youth participants.

Results from youth in Idaho and Delaware receiving the 4-H Food Smart Families nutrition education program were:

- 98% & 96% learned what foods to eat everyday
- 95% & 94% learned why it is important to eat a healthy diet
- 76% & 80% used cooking skills they learned, in order to prepare food at home
- 64% & 67% taught their family skills for shopping on a budget

Through the efforts of these two states and various techniques used, diverse and under-served audiences were engaged through the collaboration of University of Idaho Extension personnel and community partners working towards the ultimate goal of educating youth and their families on the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

Implementation of the 4-H Food Smart Families program or a similar adaptation can be accomplished with diverse demographics. Adjusting marketing techniques to recruit audiences can play a major role in the overall participant involvement. Programming where travel for participants is limited or unnecessary can drastically increase participation rates. Selecting and modifying an appropriate curriculum can target key activities that are most relevant to different age groups, comprehension levels and cultural backgrounds. By utilizing Teens as Teachers the program can be expanded and incorporated into community involvement activities.

### The Future

The success of this program has given University of Idaho Extension the ability to continue implementation throughout Idaho. Dependent on future funding, there is great interest and desire to offer the 4-HFSF program in additional under-served areas. Key to the sustainability is the continued partnerships with family and consumer sciences faculty and unique community partners who already sponsor youth programs.

### Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

National 4-H Council and ConAgra Foundation.



A teen trainer leads youth in a handwashing activity.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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