

## Youth gain valuable life skills through district oral presentation contest

### AT A GLANCE

Youth gain important life skills in 4-H such as public speaking, self-confidence and organizational skills and have an opportunity to practice these skills in a safe environment.

### The Situation

Public speaking is one of the greatest fears among adults and yet is a skill that can be learned as a youth to overcome the fear. In the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program, youth are required to give an oral presentation for each project they are enrolled in. Youth learn to organize their thoughts and plan how to present their message. They then deliver their presentation in front of their club. To gain self-confidence speaking in front of a group, youth need to practice over and over and experience positive feedback from their audience. Youth deliver their presentation for their club, and in most counties in the southern district, there is also an opportunity to participate in a county oral presentation contest. Youth receiving a blue ribbon on the county contest level may advance and deliver their presentation on the district level.

### Our Response

Leadership for the 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest is a partnership between 4-H professionals in the district and two volunteer supervisors. The volunteers serve two years with one rotating off each year providing for a year of mentoring between



4-H youth oral presentation on fly tying at the 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest. Photo by Nancy Shelstad.

an experienced volunteer and a new volunteer in the position.

### Program Outcomes

The 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest is open to all youth in the southern district who qualify by receiving a blue ribbon at their local county contest. This contest serves as a stepping stone from the county level for youth to speak in front of a public audience at the Western Idaho Fair. It also introduces a higher level of competition and more unfamiliar elements than the county or club settings. Youth experience an unknown audience consisting of more than just their friends and family, present from a stage, and use a microphone. Youth also need to plan and deliver their

presentation to stay within a set time constraint according to their age and type of presentation.

Presentations are judged by a panel of three judges. Following the presentation, judges give verbal feedback to the presenter and award a blue, red or white ribbon. Written feedback is also provided based on a judging form including the introduction, organization, content and accuracy, stage presence, delivery, visuals and props, and summary. Judges are encouraged to give constructive criticism to support and encourage the youth's efforts and help them understand what they can do differently to improve their public speaking skills.

## Program Outcomes

The 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest draws youth from the majority of the counties in the southern district, providing an opportunity for advanced competition. While youth may be drawn to the event because of the competition, the experience itself completes Kolb's experiential learning model cycle of "Do, Reflect, Apply," that 4-H programming uses as a foundation. Youth "do" by planning, organizing, practicing and delivering their oral presentation on the county competition level. After receiving feedback on the county level, youth have an opportunity to "reflect" on the feedback, consider what they can do different (better) and incorporate those elements into their presentation. Next, youth "apply" their new found knowledge and skills to a new but similar situation, the district oral presentation contest. Through this cycle and application of the cycle with public speaking, youth gain life skills of self-confidence, organization and public speaking.

Typically the majority of youth participants tend to be in the junior or intermediate-age categories although, in 2018, 28 of the 37 participants were in the intermediate or senior age categories. The older participants this year expressed a desire for additional, advanced competition beyond the district level, thereby looking to advance the "Do, Reflect, Apply" cycle again.

## The Future

The future of the 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest is solid and will continue to be offered. To address the need for a statewide competition to offer further advancement beyond the district level is a larger question. Many factors will need to be considered such as timing, location, and contest rules to be inclusive of all four of the University of Idaho Extension districts.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The 4-H Southern District Oral Presentation contest is possible because of the support of the Western Idaho Fair providing the facility, stage, equipment and funding to pay the judges a stipend for their time. The Southern District 4-H Leaders' Association provides funding for meals for the judges and top awards for the youth participants. Administrative support from county UI Extension staff scheduling appointments, organizing packets of score sheets and distributing Western Idaho Fair admission tickets is also critical. Volunteers support the contest by recruiting judges, checking in participants and facilitating the contest.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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