

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Zoom into 4-H; central district bringing 4-H to local families

AT A GLANCE

4-H youth unable to participate in traditional club meetings during the “shelter in place” were missing required activities and important social interaction. A 10-session Zoom event offered a solution.

The Situation

UI Extension offices were informed in early March 2020, that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were to follow Idaho Department of Health and Welfare and CDC recommendations. These included postponing or canceling 4-H gatherings and public events. The University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development suggested continuing high quality 4-H programming with online support of projects, activities and deliverables.

The responsibility of reducing the spread of COVID-19 created obstacles in continuing 4-H opportunities for families, volunteers and communities. In addition, many 4-H families were already struggling with required distance learning, and the suggestion of additional online programming might not be met with enthusiasm or participation.

Our Response

The central district 4-H team, comprised of all the 4-H professionals in the ten-county area, discussed the possibility of providing online programming that would meet the needs of local families. With all events being canceled, and no opportunity for traditional interactions, Idaho’s 4-H seemed discouraging. To



4-H clubs were invited to join for a virtual club meeting experience. Each session started with the American and 4-H pledges.

ease the sudden transition into a virtual format for 4-H programming, a list of national resources was developed by UI Extension 4-H Youth Development for 4-H families to utilize. The central district 4-H team felt developing something with more local flavor, presenting in a live format using Zoom, utilizing 4-H professionals the 4-H youth would know, recognize and interact with was critical to the success of the planned event.

Spring months are critical for families to learn about, and select, new 4-H projects. In addition, youth enrolled in market animal projects are required to complete five animal science lessons each year. The Central District Zoom into 4-H event was developed to address these project needs for local families.

The five animal science lessons presented on consecutive Tuesday afternoons were:

- Marketing — Thank you letters
- Quality Assurance — Biosecurity
- Facilities Management — Housing
- Nutrition — Basic Nutrition Requirements
- Selection — Market Ready Weights

The five introductions to 4-H projects presented on consecutive Thursday afternoons were:

- Cooking 101 — Measuring; cookie baking
- Photography — Taking cell phone photos
- Entomology — Bugs; monsters or friends
- Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth — Sugar experiments
- Handiwork of our Heritage — Origami

Program Outcomes

The attendance at the ten sessions exceeded expectations. Participants represented nine of the ten central district counties and two counties from the southern district. A total of 458 sites participated in the series with a high of 83 at the last animal science lesson. Specific attendance numbers were estimated from information shared in the chat and polling numbers.

Participants were polled at each session; 249 youth and 206 adults participated. Questions included:

- Were families successful using Zoom?
- Would the session be used as a club meeting?
- Was the experience helpful for the families?

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Donna R. Gillespie, Regional Youth Development Educator • UI Extension 4-H Youth Development • 208-312-4109 • donna@uidaho.edu

Becky Hutchings, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • bhutchings@uidaho.edu

Mashelle Barlow, 4-H Program Coordinator • UI Extension, Lincoln County • 208-886-2406 • mbarlow@uidaho.edu

Deborah Peavler, 4-H Program Coordinator • UI Extension, Gooding County • 208-934-4417 • dpeavler@uidaho.edu

Rosie Davids, 4-H Program Coordinator • UI Extension, Cassia County • 208-878-9461 • rdavids@uidaho.edu

Jason Thomas, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • jasont@uidaho.edu

Tina Miller, 4-H Program Coordinator • UI Extension, Jerome County • 208-324-7578 • tdickard@uidaho.edu

Grace Wittman, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Cassia County • 208-878-9461 • gwittman@uidaho.edu

Cindy Kinder, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Camas & Gooding Counties • 208-934-4417 • ckinder@uidaho.edu

Chandra Vaughan, Associate Extension Educator • UI Extension, Blaine County • 208-788-5585 • cvaughan@uidaho.edu

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- Did the lesson help youth with their 4-H project or encourage them to enroll in the project?
- Did youth attend with adults?
- Was something new learned about the topic?
- Would youth and adults like to continue participating in 4-H presentations virtually after “shelter in place” and other restrictions are over?

Eight poll questions were asked of youth participants. Data showed 19% of the youth were not able to use the session for a required club meeting, over 70% of the youth attended the session with their parent or other adult, 97% learned something new about the topic, 78% said information provided would help with their project or encourage them to enroll in the project and 49% would like to continue virtual 4-H lessons.

Five poll questions were asked of adult participants. Data showed 96% of the adults said the session was helpful for their family and 70% would like to continue virtual 4-H lessons.

The Future

All sessions were recorded and shared with handout materials with central district 4-H professionals and can be requested by certified 4-H volunteers to share at club meetings.

Even though Zoom into 4-H was very successful, the data indicated there was knowledge gained and families appreciated the opportunity, there are no imminent plans to schedule additional Zoom lessons. Many other online learning opportunities for 4-H families are now available and the hope is Idaho's 4-H will soon be able to return to face-to-face activities.