

impact

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

2020 Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention; a virtual and vibrant change

AT A GLANCE

Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention is an opportunity for youth to experience college life and explore careers. Despite challenges of the 2020 pandemic, a successful virtual event occurred.

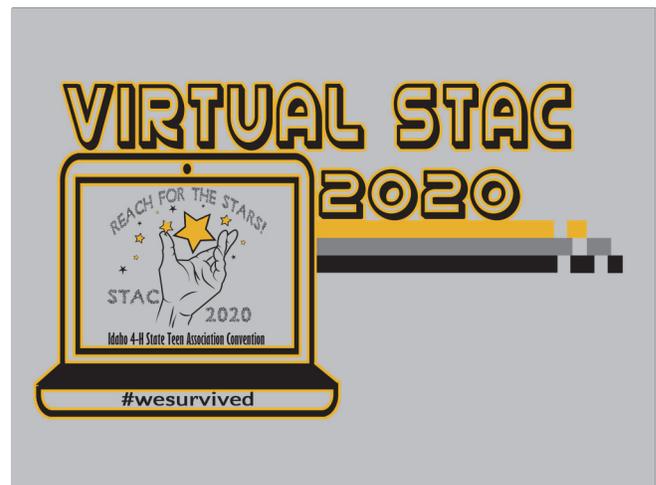
The Situation

At the Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention (STAC), youth are provided an opportunity to explore career opportunities, visit the University of Idaho campus and begin visualizing a prosperous future with other Idaho teens. 4-H programming throughout Idaho required transformation to meet the requirements of Idaho Public Health and the Governor's Idaho Rebounds guidelines.

How could a convention, with the primary emphasis of being on the U of I campus with other Idaho teens, be restructured to provide the same experience? In March 2020, the STAC steering committee faced this question and others, including how to provide quality workshops, conduct the 4-H state officer elections and encourage social interaction between teen participants.

Our Response

The STAC steering committee, made up of eight youth and eight adults, in partnership with five Idaho STAC officers plan, promote and facilitate the convention each year. Everyone was asked to consider what "Head to clearer thinking and Health for better living" really means in our present 4-H world. Concerns about social distancing and the unavailability of the U of I campus



The logo and theme for the 2020 convention were updated to reflect the change in how youth participated in the event.

in June were shared by UI Extension administrators and the group agreed that a face-to-face on-campus event could not be held as it had been in the past.

The positive attitude and resourcefulness of the teens enabled the planning committee to move forward. A video was distributed on the 4-H Facebook page informing Idaho's 4-H teens of the change and ensuring them that STAC would be held, albeit in a new format. <https://www.facebook.com/idaho4hSTA/videos/545864086054966/>.

In less than 90 days, the schedule, workshop offerings, registration changes, election procedures and social activities were all changed to be offered as an online experience. Guidelines were established for teens to submit campaign videos for state offices, workshop

presenters were contacted and asked to teach via Zoom, and a U of I website was developed to provide a one-stop place to access all parts of the convention. Washington 4-H teens had been involved in the 2020 STAC planning earlier in the year, and after Idaho was invited by Hawaii to share their 4-H teen programs, youth from Hawaii also joined to plan STAC.

STAC was held June 22-25, 2020 with over 100 Zoom sites participating each day. Opening morning included a welcome by U of I President Green and a U of I video to capture campus presence. Each morning, concurrent sessions were held and facilitated by state 4-H teen officers. Sessions included the keynote speaker, candidate speeches, district meetings, officer voting, officer induction ceremony and interactive games. Teens were challenged in district competitions to solve an escape room and to play Quizlet, Bingo and Pictionary. Fourteen youth, representing three states, competed in a virtual variety show. Zoom breakout rooms were used to facilitate district meetings and candidate interviews, and Zoom links were provided for individual workshops.

Afternoon sessions included 23 workshops teens could choose to attend, such as Making Connections to STEM Careers, Funding Your Goals, Public Speaking, Exploring College Majors and Careers and other career exploration and workforce preparation topics. Service-learning opportunities were also offered each afternoon.

On the last day, teens had the chance to come together in small groups at their local UI Extension office for

Clover Connection celebrations. Eight sites participated and provided a pizza lunch and social interactions.

Program Outcomes

Registrations included 156 youth, 111 from Idaho, 29 from Washington and 16 from Hawaii. Teens from 27 Idaho counties and one tribal program participated. Fifty-two percent of youth who responded to the STAC evaluation indicated the experience had met most of their expectations and 35% indicated all their expectations were met and the experience was what they wanted. When asked for suggestions to improve STAC, many commented on the hope the convention would return to the University of Idaho campus. Others were complimentary of the adaptability and willingness of the committee to continue to offer a STAC experience and suggested ways to increase virtual participation. It was evident most of the teens preferred a face-to-face experience but were appreciative of the online opportunity.

The Future

The success of this event was a springboard to conversations about what future STAC looks like. Some teens expressed that the virtual component allowed them to attend, when they could not have in the past, due to travel, time and money concerns. Steering committee teens said a “hybrid” conference with both an on-campus and virtual opportunity is the future, with no limits to the number of teens who could take advantage of the excellent programming STAC continues to provide.

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