

impact

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

4-H international exchange program promotes global awareness

AT A GLANCE

Idaho's involvement in student exchange programs enhances the 4-H mission of global citizenship through cultural immersion and international shared experiences.

The Situation

As Idaho's economy increasing so does its global market impact. Today's youth need to increase their exposure to other cultures and embrace diversity to be successful global citizens. Many of Idaho's rural communities have limited resources to provide youth personal experiences that promote cultural understanding and acceptance. As Idaho's population increases, there is a greater need for our youth to increase their cultural awareness and understanding to succeed in an ever diversified world.

Through the exchange program, Idaho youth learn firsthand from an international student about their culture and the importance of communication at a different level. At the same time youth teach international delegates about what it's like to live in America, and more specifically Idaho. The personal connections made through the exchange provides a global perspective for students and families. The exchange student's presence in communities reaches beyond the hosting family as delegates interact within the community increasing the community's relation to the world.



2019 International Exchange delegates arriving in Boise from Japan, Taiwan and South Korea and joined by 4-H ambassadors.

Our Response

For 42 years Idaho's 4-H has strived to expose youth to different cultures through a student exchange program. In collaboration with Washington and a Japanese youth program; Idaho pioneered 4-H exchange with the first delegation of Japanese students arrival in the summer of 1972. Over the years the program expanded to include 25 states and 41 international youth organizations. Idaho families have been able to experience a variety of cultures while sharing their own. The program matches youth delegates and chaperones with Idaho families for a four-week cultural immersion. Delegates are matched to a host sibling of similar age and interest to foster friendship. Host families integrate the delegates into their home allowing them to

impact University of Idaho Extension

experience American life in a personalized way. Idaho youth can travel abroad on a month-long exchange during the summer to experience being the exchange student.

The exchange partnership is facilitated through a national organization, States' 4-H International Exchange Programs, that connects cooperative extensions through their state 4-H offices to international youth programs. State coordinators work with Extension educators, volunteers, 4-H families through email, grass roots communication and social media to promote the program to Idaho families.

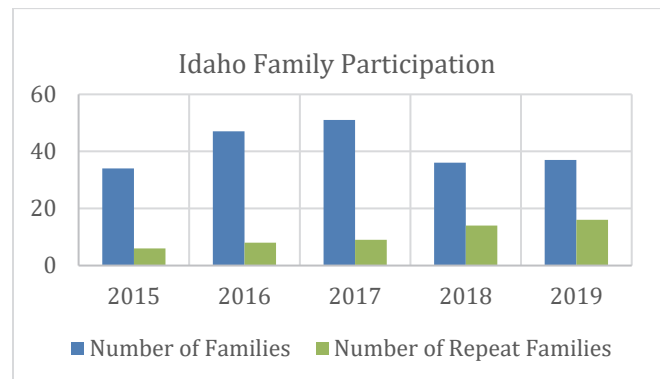
In the last eight years over 200 Idaho families have participated in the exchange program. Twenty-six percent of those families have hosted one or more years. Most families agree that they participated in the international exchange program to help youth develop skills in adapting to differences in values and behavior, as well as, provide an international experience for their child(ren). As a result of hosting, the families enjoyed learning about people who are different with an overwhelming number agreeing that the exchange resulted in a positive and life changing experience for their families. Sharing everyday life with an exchange youth was the favorite part of the program for many families.

Program Outcomes

From 2012 to 2019 the participation in the exchange program has increased from 17 delegates to an average of 34 delegates coming to Idaho each summer. Most host siblings agreed that through this international exchange they enjoyed learning about people who are different from them, as well as increasing their ability to communicate. As a result of their experiences in our program, 4-H'ers have encouraged others to host, want to host again, and/or have traveled with the outbound program. One host sibling explained that they have "come to a greater understanding about the world

around me, and how important communication is," because of their involvement with the program.

The basis of the exchange program is to implement the 4-H "learning by doing" model. 4-H members and their families experience culture immersion of delegates that is not possible through a directed tour visit to another country. Youth get to experience a deeper level of culture by experiencing and interacting with their host families and delegates. Both American and international youth learn leadership, respect and communication skills that will assist them in their future roles.



The Future

In order to continue to promote cultural awareness to Idaho youth, the program will expand its presence in the state. The program is looking to engage more 4-H members to interact with exchange students through an ambassador program. Youth will welcome exchange students to Idaho and introduce them to 4-H. The program is expanding outreach by offering global citizen lessons to be utilized by district and club level education opportunities. The exchange programs ultimate goal is to have an international delegate visit every county in the state, giving Idaho families the ability to experience global culture in a personal way.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Judith McShane, Program Specialist • University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development • 208-454-7655 • jmcshane@uidaho.edu
Natasha Tienhaara, 4-H Administrative Assistant • University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development • 208-454-7614 • ntienhaara@uidaho.edu

5-20-jmcshane-4h-international • 2/20