YOUTH-4-H — 2012 Centennial begins; Idaho youth tackle tough bills in Boise

CONTACT ARLINDA NAUMAN at anauman@uidaho.edu or MONIKA RIEGEL at mriegel@uidaho.edu

IDAHO’S BIGGEST, MOST SUCCESSFUL youth leadership program — University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development — prepares to celebrate its centennial in 2012 with a series of special events including parties at each county’s fair. Kickoff is a volunteer leaders’ November forum in Boise. Centennial focus will include raising funds for programs and scholarships.

Meanwhile, 160 4-Hers representing each Idaho county will descend on Boise February 19 to 21 to hobnob with Idaho political leaders, lobbyists, and jurists in the 24th annual Know Your Government conference. “These students don’t merely watch legislative and judicial branches at work. They DO the work,” says Monika Riegel, 4-H conference planner.

In the legislative workshop youths assume roles as elected lawmakers or lobbyists while considering tough bills — mandatory physical education for high school students, mandatory driving tests for senior citizens, more bicycle lanes for Idaho, an illegal immigration bill similar to Arizona’s, denying emergency hospital care to undocumented residents, and whether abortions should be illegal for girls under 16. In judicial workshops, teams play prosecutor, defender, defendant, and judge in five different trials of a drive-by shooting case.

Surveys demonstrate that youth involved in 4-H—some 40,000 in Idaho now—are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, consistently get good grades, and do shine in leadership arenas. Examples: Idaho 4-H alums include Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter and current legislators Tom Trail and Darrell Bolz.

Origins. Arlinda Nauman, state 4-H director, said the national program first organized in 1902. Ten years later, a Lemhi County school superintendent created an event where school children made projects to display at the county fair. That evolved into today’s 4-H program operated by UI Extension. 4-H provides afterschool programs and fifth day activities for 4-day schools. 4-Hers raise animals, learn first aid, train wild horses, raise money, give speeches, and do projects for county fairs. They focus on science and math, create computer animations, grow gardens, build and program robots for competitions, and serve their communities.

Idaho teens learn by judging livestock, soils

CONTACT CINDY KINDER at ckind@uidaho.edu and ANITA FALEN at afalen@uidaho.edu

JUDGING for 4-H and FFA members requires youths to identify characteristics, evaluate them, and articulate why some are better. That’s why UI Extension educators throughout Idaho train youths in judging skills.

“Judging is something youths can do very well,” says Cindy Kinder, UI Extension educator in Camas and Gooding counties. She helps organize annual 3-day judging camps for youths from Idaho and neighboring states each summer at the College of Southern Idaho in Twin Falls. “Teens get excited about it, and they often even decide to attend college after gaining confidence as a judge,” a bonus in a state where only 49 percent of high school graduates go right on to college.

In the 2010 camp, 135 youths ages 13 to 18 learned how to best evaluate cattle, sheep, meat goats, and pigs. Many alums of this camp go on to win regional and national judging events. Kinder’s 2011 camp is July 6 to 8.

Judging soils also challenges FFA and 4-H teens who learn to identify basic soil properties and determine how different soils affect crop growth. Each year, up to 500 Idaho teens participate in FFA and 4-H soil judging contests coordinated by a team including Anita Falen, Moscow, in UI’s plant, soil and entomological sciences department.

Winning soil judging teams this year from Troy and Gooding will compete at a national event in Oklahoma City in May.

Interest grows in UI credits for HS students

CONTACT LOU RIESENBERG at lreisenb@uidaho.edu

A THREE-YEAR-OLD PROGRAM offering Idaho high school students college credit for University of Idaho-level agriculture classes continues to expand.

“It’s maybe the only one of its kind in the nation that operates through agricultural education programs,” said Allison Touchstone, senior instructor in the University of Idaho’s Department of Agricultural and Extension Education.

“An overwhelming number of students who take the classes are interested in or have already enrolled in a four-year college program,” said Touchstone, who earned her doctorate last year studying the dual credit program.

Last fall, 173 students at 22 high schools across Idaho earned college credit by taking college-level agricultural education, agricultural economics, animal and veterinary science, and plant science classes at their high schools.

Participating high school teachers must attend an annual institute to ensure their classes and students meet university standards, said Lou Riesenberg, UI professor of agricultural and extension education, who oversees the program.

DID YOU KNOW?

54%

IDAHO 4-H MEMBERS LIVING IN RURAL AREAS. THE OTHER 46% OF 4-HERS LIVE IN URBAN OR METRO IDAHO. ABOUT 10% OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS ARE HISPANIC.