4-H CENTENNIAL—What has UI Extension’s leadership done for Idaho youth through 4-H?

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AS UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT celebrates 100 years and launches its second century, the time is right to reflect on impacts 4-H has had on Idaho and its youth. Part of the nationwide Cooperative Extension System, 4-H in Idaho, as in other states, is operated by the land grant, the University of Idaho.

This story reviews the past two decades under the guidance of 4-H Director Arlinda Nauman, Moscow, who heads a state level staff of 11 working with UI Extension staff in 42 counties. Under her watch, $7 million in federal and corporate grants have supported new at-risk youth and after-school programs for Idaho K-12 children and teens: 15 Idaho counties have benefitted from these programs that bring structure, mentoring, and educational activities to Idaho youth in need of guidance until working parents come home. Most target “at risk” or low income and minority youth. Grants often nurtured programs for five years, giving communities like Grangeville, Riggins, Elk City, and Marsing time to find ways to continue them after grants ended. Other highlights:

Bonus VISTA help. Nauman recruited a National Community Service Corporation partnership that since 2005 has provided 8 AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers a year—generating $1.6 million in salaries—to work with after-school programs and build extension’s capacity to reach at-risk youth.

Engaging volunteers. Recognizing the crucial role of volunteer leaders to 4-H, Nauman nurtured the Idaho State 4-H Leaders’ Association, providing volunteers with training, support, recognition, and a voice in program direction—all things that build loyalty, skill, and dedication among 4-H volunteers, nearly 4,000 today. A total of 123 volunteers have been recognized in Idaho’s 4-H Hall of Fame.

Robust endowment. The 4-H endowment has grown from $55,000 to more than $2 million. Interest from it funds programs at the local, state, national, and international levels, scholarships for 4-H youth programs and higher education, and materials for science and other activities.

Encouraging diversity. Eager to serve all Idaho youth, Nauman laid groundwork for programs currently impacting underserved audiences including Hispanic families, children of military families, and children on the Coeur d’Alene and Nez Perce Indian Reservations.

Other impacts. Idaho 4-H’s statewide survey in 2004 documents that Idaho youth in 4-H have better grades, are more active in civic efforts, and participate in fewer risky behaviors than do their peers who are not in 4-H. Focus groups and other surveys show that 4-H youth programs improve ISAT scores in science and math and that after school programs both reduce juvenile crime between 3 and 6 p.m. and reduce stress levels of Idaho parents.

25th year for 4-H’s Know Your Government

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Nearly 200 Idaho 4-H 8th and 9th graders are much wiser this week about how Idaho’s government works after they debated bills, argued legal cases, and lobbied teen legislators—all in Idaho’s most hallowed civic halls.

During the 25th annual Know Your Government (KYG) Conference held February 18 to 20 in Boise’s capital and judicial buildings, participants got face time with everyone from Idaho Gov. C. L. “Butch” Otter to Supreme Court Justice Daniel Eismann and 30 state legislators who mentored the teens in the finer points of legislative and judicial processes.

“KYG adds another dimension to the training in 4-H. It helps our teens learn about state government and the role that elected citizens have in making it work effectively for all,” said Idaho State Rep. Darrell Bolz, Caldwell, a former 4-H member who, since he became a legislator, has supported many KYG conferences.

“I have often told the teens that following their weekend experience they will know more about the workings of the state legislature than many adults,” said Bolz. “The challenges and experience of debating a bill become a reality.”

Legislative bill debates included whether dirt bikers must stay on designated public trails; whether youths under age 18 can ride a motorcycle without a helmet; and whether Internet classes for Idaho students must be taught by Idaho teachers. The 4-Hers’ judicial case involved one male who threatened to shoot another male at a school site.

Idaho 4-H seeks 100 century families

www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/events/events/stateevents/centennial

MANY DEVOTED ALUMS of Idaho’s 4-H programs trace their roots back through three or four generations of 4-H activity.

As part of its 2012 centennial celebration, 4-H hopes at least 100 such families will fill out an application from the website above by July 15 so they, too, can be honored at a fall 2012 dinner celebration.

These intergenerational 4-H families know from experience the value of Idaho’s 4-H youth development programs and treasure impacts on their own lives.

“I was probably 9 or 10 when I entered my first calf project in our county fair,” recalls Idaho State Sen. Bert Brackett, who lives on his family’s cattle ranch near Twin Falls. He and his siblings all earned their share of blue ribbons and still use leadership skills learned from 4-H, as did his five children. Now its his grandchildren’s turn.

“Judging was important to me,” said Brackett during a break in his legislative duties. “I learned a lot from livestock evaluation and giving oral reasons on why some cattle were better than others,” he added.

“Those oral reason skills have helped me with critical thinking, organizing my thoughts, speaking, and thinking on my feet. It’s all good training.” One of some 30 legislative advisors for Know Your Government Conference participants, Brackett sees 4-H as still being relevant and important to his grandchildren’s generation.

“Kids have so many opportunities today. But for sure, if they get involved in 4-H, it keeps them occupied with worthwhile activities,” he added.

DID YOU KNOW?

5,034

The number of Idaho 4-Hers living on a farm in 2011. That was 15% of Idaho’s 33,163 4-H members in 2011.

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EXTENSION 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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