4-H program asks Idaho youths to help senior citizens face challenges using robots

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MORE THAN 1,000 YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS IDAHO recently talked with senior citizens, sought solutions to their challenges, then programmed robots to overcome common issues through an effort sponsored by the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program.

“The children interacted with professional scientists and engineers to explore their research and ideas,” said Tim Ewers, 4-H youth specialist at Moscow. Teams tackled problems such as limited mobility, chronic illnesses, loneliness, and challenging environments.

Six 9- to 14-year olds from Rigby made up team D6 that won the FIRST LEGO League South Idaho Championship Jan. 26 at Twin Falls. D6 team members won the “golden ticket” to compete with other teams from some 30 countries invited to the league’s April world championship.

“It was a great experience for them. We’re one of 85 teams in the world that gets the golden ticket and the chance to go to St. Louis,” said Shane Brown, D6’s co-coach at Rigby.

The Techno Tornadoes 4-H Club of Hayden repeated as North Idaho champions, advancing to the league’s open championship at LEGOLAND in Carlsbad, Calif., in May.

“I think one of the reasons the kids have enjoyed it this year is the contact with people outside their own sphere. It gives it that personal touch,” said Allyson Gross, the Hayden club’s leader. The Jan. 19 North Idaho championship in Moscow was supported by a $25,000 grant from Time Warner Cable.

4-H celebrates 136 century families in Idaho

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BY NOW CLAUD AND ELVITA JUDD’S FAMILY of Clearwater County has passed the halfway post in becoming a University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program millennial family.

As part of Idaho 4-H’s centennial celebration in 2012, the state office on the Moscow campus asked families to tally up their members’ years in 4-H. The list soon grew to 136 century families, those whose members collectively claimed at least 100 years as members and leaders.

The family of Claud and Elvita Judd of Fraser rose to the top of the list with 495 years by 2012. Their lifetimes of service included mentoring hundreds of 4-H members and helping with the Clearwater County Fair. Claud served in both legislative chambers and as county commissioner.

At last count, families topping 400 years included the Judds, 495; Mortensens of Madison County, 458; the Joe Erneking Sr. family of Idaho County, 438; and the Heatons of Cassia County, 401.

The families’ contributions to 4-H reflect the program’s true nature, said Jim Lindstrom, the new 4-H youth development director at Moscow. “It’s a symbiotic relationship. Communities, kids, and families need 4-H – and 4-H needs them. Working together we can build the very best possible system to meet each community’s needs,” he said.

Know Your Government draws 4-H’ers to Boise

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PRESIDENTS WEEKEND IN IDAHO’S CAPITOL will witness 160 4-H members taking up the reins of government.

The Know Your Government Conference sponsored by University of Idaho Extension’s 4-H Youth Development program celebrates its 26th year in 2013.

While in Boise, the youths from across the state will meet with Idaho’s elected leaders. They will also practice their leadership skills in debating bills addressing issues from taxation to allowing farmers to grow industrial hemp.

Young jurists will weigh arguments in a vehicular manslaughter case, and reporters will practice recording the events of the day.

This year’s conference will mirror the Idaho Legislature itself with a sizeable proportion of new participants. Nearly half of 4-H members heading for the Capitol this year are repeating as delegates, advancing in leadership responsibilities.

A planning committee of 43 youth delegates and adults works throughout the year to organize the three-day conference. The top advisers are 4-H members returning for their fourth conference.

“They help us understand what the delegates are doing and help the chaperones formulate their responsibilities. They really help us in working with the youths. The youths are taking a first-hand step in that leadership role,” said Erika Thiel, Idaho 4-H conference coordinator.

“It’s not adults running the show, per se. Yes, we’re there, and we do manage it, but the youth are empowered to take that step up,” she said. “The youths on the committee are there to build their leadership skill set.”