

IMPACT



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4-H: Continuing to Make a Difference

The Situation

Many states have passed the 100-year mark for the existence of the 4-H program in their states. Will there be a 200-year mark observed for the 4-H Program in your state? The answer to that question lies in the ability of the 4-H program to demonstrate to citizens and elected officials the continued relevance and worth of this 100-year old institution. In the past, the value of 4-H was conveyed by anecdotal success stories and the “gut-feeling” of those familiar with the program. Those methods are no longer adequate to insure its continued existence. The purpose of this study was to provide sound, research-based information to the public about the effect of 4-H membership on the lives of young people.

Our Response

The University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System conducted a survey of Idaho public school students in the 5th, 7th, and 9th grades in the fall of 2002. Sixteen randomly selected counties participated in the research project, and then within each county four schools were also randomly selected for the study. There were 3,601 surveys completed and returned from 53 schools. Of the 3,601 respondents to the survey, there were 577 students who had been 4-H members for two or more years.

Program Outcomes

Conclusions noted in the Idaho 4-H Impact Study, which are statistically significant, include:

- 9th grade 4-H members were **less likely** to drink alcohol, shoplift, use drugs, damage property, and smoke cigarettes than their non-4-H member classmates. Moreover, the non-4-H members were:
 - Nearly **twice as likely** to drink alcohol, damage property, and smoke cigarettes.
 - **Twice as likely** to use drugs and shop lift.
- 4-H members were **more likely** to get mostly A's in their schoolwork and less likely to receive poor grades than their non-4-H classmates.
- 4-H Members were **more likely** to hold leadership positions than their non-4-H classmates.
- 4-H members were **more likely** to have been involved in projects to help others and given time or money to charities than their non-4-H classmates.
- 4-H members were **more likely** than non 4-H members to have an adult in their life other than their parents with whom they can discuss important issues.

- 4-H members were **more likely** than non-4-H members to have had a recent conversation with their parents regarding drugs, sex, alcohol and other important issues.
- 4-H members responded in a significantly more positive manner than non-4-H members to the following Positive Identity statements:
 - When things don't go well for me, I am good at finding a way to make things better.
 - I have control over the things that will happen in my life.
 - On the whole, I like myself.
 - I feel I have much to be proud of.
 - I feel like my life has a purpose.
- 4-H members responded in a significantly more positive manner than non-4-H members to the following Social Competency statements:
 - I'm good at planning ahead.
 - I feel really sad when one of my friends is unhappy.
 - I am good at making and keeping friends.
 - I know how to say "no" when someone wants me to do things I know are wrong or dangerous.
- 4-H members responded in a significantly more positive manner than non-4-H members to the following Self Confidence, Character, and Empowerment statements:
 - I can do things on my own.
 - I set goals.
 - Ten years from now, I think I will be happy.
 - Adults in my town or city make me feel important.
 - Adults in my town or city listen to what I have to say.
 - Adults in my town care about people my age.
 - In my town, I feel like I matter to people.
 - In my family, I feel important.
 - I'm given lots of chances to help make my town or city a better place to live.
 - Students help decide what goes on at my school.
- 4-H members responded in a significantly more positive manner than non-4-H members to the following leadership statements:
 - I volunteer in class to lead activities.
 - I feel other kids look up to me and follow my example.
- 4-H members responded in a significantly more positive manner than non-4-H members to the following Skills Learned statements:
 - I am comfortable giving a speech or demonstration.
 - I am a good organizer.
 - I am a good money manager.

County Partners

The following Extension Educators were involved in coordination of data collection at the local level. They also assisted the principal investigator of this study with data interpretation and reporting.
 District 1 – Michelle Pike, Nez Perce County
 District 2 – Joey Peutz, Canyon County
 District 3 – Rhea Lanting, Twin Falls County
 District 4 – April Ward, Bannock County

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26-03jgoodwin-4hdifference.doc
 10/03