

# IMPACT



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## Horsin' Around Camp Builds Life Skills

### *The Situation*

The first Horsin' Around Camp for youth was designed to strengthen the bond between horse 4-H participants and the Extension Office staff, promote good record keeping and introduce other aspects of 4-H. 4-H Horse project members in Minidoka County did not use the resources available at the county Extension Office as freely as other 4-H members and were not as actively involved in camps, teen clubs and public speaking. In addition, record books were not as accurate and complete as 4-H leaders and Extension staff and faculty desired.

### *Our Response*

Planning an activity specifically for these youth and their families at the McGregor Center, which houses the Minidoka County Extension Office, seemed to be a good way to introduce various programs and activities. In addition educational workshops, including completing record books, would be incorporated.

A committee of Extension staff and 4-H leaders planned the first overnight camp for a weekend in January 2002. Youth interested in the 4-H horse program could come and learn more about horses, project requirements and meet new friends with similar interests.

The first year's activities were so successful that the camp is now an annual event with planning and workshops conducted by a committee of adult and youth volunteers. A skill-a-thon was added in 2003 and plans for the 2004 camp include teen counselors.

### *Program Outcomes*

Over half of the 4-H members and leaders in the Minidoka County horse program participated in the first overnight camp at the Minidoka County Extension Office in 2002. Participants enjoyed get acquainted games with Idaho 4-H Ambassadors and participated in a lively "Horse Bowl." Friday night included a pizza party with popcorn and a movie before lights out. Saturday's workshops included equine reproduction, roping, breeds and colors, a horseshoe craft class, snaffle bit, reining and cutting, grand champion record books, and how to give a demonstration. An ugly hat contest was held and prizes awarded to the winners. Attendance certificates were presented to everyone before they went home on Saturday afternoon. Evaluations indicated that 100% of the participants *really* liked the majority of the activities and will attend Horsin' Around again.

In 2003 youth from other counties also participated and enrollment increased to 39 youth and eight adults. Information about chariot racing was demonstrated and in the afternoon everyone was able to go outside and enjoy a Magic Valley Chariot Racing event at Rupert Downs. A horse skill-a-thon with nine stations and 80 questions was available for youth and adults to participate in. Awards were again presented and t-shirt iron-ons with the participant's picture were presented to all those attending. The camp appealed to a wide variety of interests, provided something to take home, was mostly hands-on and involved some real horses. Evaluations in 2003 again showed strong support and enjoyment of the overnight camp.



*Horsin' Around Camp participants learn new uses for old horseshoes in the craft class.*

The overnight horse camp is successful because 4-H clubs and members are involved in the planning and have “buy-in,” attention getting brochures are developed for promotion, costs are kept to a minimum and the activities are FUN. Camp participants are charged \$10.00 each; these fees are used to pay for the meals and snacks provided during the weekend and other expenses.

Horsin' Around Camp has provided a benefit not initially expected, the leadership growth of the youth attending. A committee of youth and adults is coordinating the 2004 camp. They have determined that older teens will serve as camp counselors and have established interview questions and times to select this year's counselors. Counselors will have responsibilities for coordination, recruitment, supervision and evaluation of the camp.

Minidoka County 4-H horse record books have shown a steady improvement and youth, leaders and families are less frustrated with project books and requirements since the camps have been initiated. The planning committee has again scheduled a session on “grand champion” record books for the 2004 camp.

Horse project members who have attended a Horsin' Around camp are beginning to participate in the Minidoka County 4-H Teen Association, attend 4-H/Youth summer camp and become aware of the other aspects of 4-H.

When asked what they learned at horse camp participants responded:

- “Now I know if something is wrong with my horse.”
- “I will keep up my record book all year, not just before fair.”
- “I learned the proper names of equitation equipment.”
- “I learned to be nice and I made new friends everywhere I turned.”

In addition to leadership, organization and record keeping, other life skills emphasized at the overnight camp include teamwork, problem solving, social skills, communication, managing feelings and contributing to a group effort. Youth attending the camp are “learning by doing” and having fun.

**Future Plans:** Horsin' Around camps are now planned as an annual event and invitations are extended to youth and adults throughout the lower eight counties of District III. Camp information has been shared with several other counties who are considering horse camps.

With the success of the overnight horse camp Minidoka County 4-H leaders are considering camps for other project areas such as sewing and cooking.

## ***For More Information***

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