

# IMPACT



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## District III 4-H—Programs Reaching Families

### *The Situation*

In 2002, due to the University of Idaho (UI) Extension response to budget cuts, 4-H programming in District III was restructured. This reorganization led to the formation of a "District III 4-H Team." Eight County 4-H Program Coordinators and two Area 4-H/Youth Extension Educators united in a team effort to bring stronger 4-H programs to the Magic Valley and expand programs to underserved audiences. After one year, a survey conducted with the 4-H Program Coordinators determined that they felt their county 4-H programs were improving because of the team effort, and they also felt more knowledgeable about 4-H issues and consequently better able to handle them. Team members also appreciated the support for district-wide activities and the consistency of information provided by the Area Extension Educators.

### *Our Response*

Donna R. Gillespie and Cindy A. Kinder, Area 4-H/Youth Extension Educators, partnered with 4-H Team members, Kathi Kimball, Blaine County; Connie Funkhouser, Camas County; Rosie Davids, Cassia County; Marie Baucum, Gooding County; Tina Dickard, Jerome County; Kristy Boguslawski, Lincoln County; Jeni Bywater, Minidoka County; and Teresa Tverdy, Twin Falls County to conduct a survey of District III 4-H volunteers, members and families in 2005. The purpose of the survey was to determine if after three years a strong 4-H Team effort had actually improved district-wide programming by affecting youth and adult participants.

Surveys asked participants to designate which county and district councils and boards they were active in and to evaluate their leadership. A list of 22 District III activities was also provided and participants were asked to indicate if they attended the activity, if they did not attend but received the information and from what source they received it. Information about how district-wide activities encourage families to stay involved, and how these activities benefited youth in the community was also collected. Participants were encouraged to rate the response they received when asking questions about 4-H.

### *Program Outcomes*

The surveys returned were 60% from volunteer leaders, 30% parents and 10% youth. They were collected at district 4-H contests (public speaking, style review, dog and horse shows), district council meetings (horse and pony, camp board and district 4-H leaders), and from distribution through the eight county 4-H newsletters. Respondents stated they were active in District III 4-H Leaders Council, Horse and Pony Council, Central Idaho 4-H Camp Board, county leader councils, county 4-H advisory boards, teen councils and/or market animal sale committees. Respondents indicated that 77% had seen a positive change in leadership of these councils and boards due to the programming efforts of the Team. None said there was a negative change and 23% indicated no opinion.

Surveys showed that 4-H families are receiving information from several sources, including County 4-H Program Coordinators, Area 4-H Educators, other UI Educators and county office secretaries.

When asked how they would rate the responses they received to their questions, 85% said they received a clear answer and 15% indicated the answer they received may have been unclear but the source knew where to go to find the answer. Eventually 100% of the participants received clear, accurate information in response to their 4-H questions. No one indicated that they were unable to find help or that their questions went unanswered.

Some other comments from the survey were:

- District-wide activities have made me a better leader and have helped spur interest in members.
- There are a wide variety of activities so there is something for everyone.
- The positive change in leadership has made me more involved, the county more diverse and all more active and involved.
- The district effort involves more kids in great activities.
- There are more opportunities through strong communication.
- I have little experience in 4-H but with the great organization—and I do mean “organized,” I am able to make a quick call and make sure I am on the proper track and aligned with 4-H guidelines.
- 4-H group activities and classes provide youth in my club with more variety and ideas than I alone cannot provide. They are great!
- The leadership effort keeps me encouraged to stick with the 4-H program as a volunteer and parent of 4-H.
- Our kids in our club have been able to compete in excellent judging contests this year. They learned a lot.
- I have seen a lot of enthusiasm with the youth in our community especially for the day projects.
- Our county is kept informed on what is going on with other counties and in District III.
- With more communication there are more programs and better run programs.
- I have seen positive reinforcement, leadership and knowledge and more scholarship opportunities.
- The benefit is, people young or old are involved in activities in their communities, this benefits the entire community.



*Over 120 youth from 8 counties participated in the first annual Wildlife Camp, a district-wide activity coordinated by members of the District III 4-H Team.*

**Future Plans:** The District III 4-H Team will continue to work together with staff and volunteers to maintain strong district-wide 4-H programs. Plans include recruiting and training additional volunteers, continued promotion of 4-H in local communities, and support of district activities including camps and contests.

Critical issues funding has been requested by Kevin Laughlin, Ada County Extension Educator, to conduct a statewide 4-H Program Coordinator Outcome Study. If funded, the District III 4-H Team intends to participate fully in this study.

### ***For More Information***

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