

Widening Our World Through Technology

The Situation

The University of Idaho partnered with Idaho Rural Partnership, the Prairie River Library District and US West to develop a statewide educational, accessible, delivery system, which brings technology to Idaho's rural communities. Rural areas cover 90 percent of the state of Idaho, a total of 37 rural counties hold 41% of the states population. Rural communities often have problems of isolation that must be overcome by transportation and communication. In this partnership, through computer access and training the residents of rural Idaho have been afforded the opportunity to overcome the great distances that separate them from their neighbors, their communities, and the world beyond.

Our Response

WOW Idaho Technology Corps is a group of youth/adult volunteers who offer new innovative technological experiences to citizens in their communities. The two major goals of the project are: 1). Developing adult and youth partnerships to form an Idaho Technology Corps and 2). Providing statewide education in computer technology to rural Idaho. A US West grant provided a "train the trainer" workshop to a core team of two adults and two teens. Following this nine teams from the following counties: Ada, Bannock, Bonneville, Cassia, Idaho, Jerome, Latah, Owyhee, and Canyon, were provided technology training on the Internet, creating Web pages, educational software,

marketing, hardware, operating systems and how to set up training in their communities.

US West has provided a small computer lab consisting of four computers and server that will travel across the state to communities for periods up to three months. A web site was developed for the project containing training information, lab schedule, lab application and tech corps web pages. The web site address is www.ets.uidaho.edu/4-H, under the Idaho Technology Corps.

Achievements

Implementation of the USWest mini-lab started at the State 4-H office in the spring of 1999 and introduced technology to Cloverbuds, 4-H teens, and home school youth. The lab started traveling in June to 4-H Natural Resources Workshop (Ketchum, ID) and Inland Empire Natural Resources Youth Camp (Harrison, ID) for a period of one week each. The first camp was for youth ages 12-14 with 65 youth utilizing the lab. The second camp was for youth ages 14-16 with 58 youth and 3 adults who utilized the lab. Simulated software (Sim Park, Oregon Trail) was used to teach concepts related to Natural Resources and the environment. Power point slide shows were developed of camp activities, using a digital camera and shared at the end of the both camps. Computers were in use from dawn till dusk daily.

The third week of June we conducted our youth/adult partnership training forming the WOW Idaho Technology Corps in Boise, Idaho. We had 9 teams representing communities in Idaho complete the training. Youth were from 7th to 11th grade. We had a team of six trainers, our original "Chili Icon" team, with two additional members. Training was given on the Internet, web page development, educational software, integrated programming, how to teach, working in adult/youth teams, developing a plan of action, and marketing.

The lab was utilized by the Kids Klub, an Extension School Age Program (Grangeville, ID) in July, and in August/September, it is located at the Evenstart Family Literacy Program (a parent/child program in

Moscow). This is a two-year program that has been made available through USWest to Cooperative Extension and the communities in Idaho.

For More Information

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