

IMPACT



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Connecting Youth with Agriculture's Food and Fiber Systems

The Situation

Fifty-eight percent of 6.8 million youth involved in 4-H live in towns and cities with more than 50,000 people. Across the nation only 10% of 4-H youth members actually live on farms and have a direct rural background. Youth who participate at the Boulder Mountain Youth Camp are 8-13 years old and live in Blaine, Camas, and Lemhi counties in south central Idaho. The majority of these youth come from families that have no or very few agricultural ties. Many of the youth have no direct understanding of the origin of food products. Many youth believe food comes from the grocery store, not from a farmer's field or a rancher's feedlot. Youth also don't realize the variety of jobs involved in agriculture production and the number of people employed in post farm production.

Our Response

In order to help youth gain a better understanding of food and fiber systems, planners for the Boulder Mountain Youth Camp asked adult volunteers and industry ambassadors to speak on a variety of topics. Topics covered agriculture's food and fiber systems, especially production of products consumers use. Commodities selected for classes at camp were wool, beef, trees, and the making of trail mix.

The objectives of all workshops were:

- Offer youth opportunities to learn about agriculture product systems and career opportunities in agriculture.

- Provide activities to increase youth life skills such as reading, mathematics, problem solving, and public speaking.
- Offer fun and learning opportunities.



All workshops covered production, management and by-products of the specific product or commodity. A fun activity to reinforcing learning was included in each session.

The Trail Mix workshop, conducted by Cindy Kinder, Extension Educator, gave youth the chance to make a food product, trail mix, and to discuss local food systems.

The Trail Mix workshop goals were to:

- Teach youth about raw food supplies and how they become final products consumers can purchase at the local store.

- Explain to youth about jobs associated with many different aspects of food production.
- Illustrate to youth how their parent's employment (agriculture and non agriculture jobs) is important to the community.

Participants engaged in multiple activities at the Trail Mix workshop. Some youth read how ingredients of trail mix are grown, while other youth located on maps where ingredients are produced in the world. Youth followed directions by reading and measuring the correct amounts of each ingredient of the trail mix recipe. All youth participated in drawing schematic maps for each trail mix ingredient on newsprint. They traced the food from farm to table. Participants were asked to write down the jobs involved at each business that produced, handled or processed the ingredient. Youth also described their parents' occupation and Cindy Kinder, helped explain that job's importance to the community.

Program Outcomes

Camp was a great opportunity to give youth a better understanding of agricultures' food and fiber systems. Volunteer adults and seven industry ambassadors provided energized workshops to camp participants. Workshops centered on discussions of raw goods but also provided opportunities for youth to develop life skills including: public speaking, reading, problem solving and mathematics.

An evaluation was conducted for the Trail Mix workshop. Youth who participated felt stronger in their understanding about raw food products and have a better awareness of food systems in their communities. Youth became more aware of jobs and careers involved in final production preparation. Twenty four percent of those attending the trail mix workshop reported they learned more about where different food comes from.

Workshop leaders and other adult volunteers felt that offering these types of workshops was a great way to engage youth in agriculture systems. One adult stated, "It was fun to see the light bulb turn on when they (youth) understood the connection between the farmer and the grocery store."



For More Information

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