

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Using Zoom for adaptive youth programming leads to success in 2020

AT A GLANCE

4-H military grants programs adapt virtually to provide at-risk youth development at Mountain Home Air Force Base despite a pandemic of global proportions.

The Situation

At-risk military youth in Elmore County had the opportunity to participate in two 4-H Youth Development programs at the Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB) youth center. University of Idaho Extension programs provide mentoring and support to help youth as they cope with difficulties such as: academic challenges, behavior problems, coping skills and associated stress that come from dealing with parental deployment and associated stresses.

This year the development of a novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the associated disease COVID-19 increased programmatic challenges by creating social isolation, increased anxiety and uncertainty. This pandemic negatively affected at-risk youth development programming.

Traditional methods of program delivery, such as meeting in person and/or group settings, were adapted due to the Central District Health, Centers for Disease Control and Idaho Department of Health and Welfare professional healthcare recommendations and guidelines set in place to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The youth center at the MHAFB and safety recommendations that were suggested were implemented by the U.S. Air Force, which led to the closure of the MHAFB



At-risk military 4-H youth from MHAFB youth center participate in a scheduled Zoom meeting during 2020. Photo: Jami Davis.

youth center where programming would normally take place.

Our Response

Partnership between the National 4-H Council and the University of Idaho Extension brought two grants to military youth at the MHAFB. These two grants include: 1) 4-H Military Partnership Grant and 2) 4-H National Mentoring Grant.

Due to Idaho professional healthcare recommendations and safety requirements implemented and the MHAFB youth center closure, adaptation and innovation were required to successfully provide quality programming to at-risk military youth in Elmore County.

The Military Partnership Grant provides 4-H activities that focus on youth citizenship, leadership, college readiness, healthy living, science and technology. The National 4-H Mentoring Grant pairs military youth with adult mentors who provide weekly 4-H activities that focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Delivery of both of these programs was accomplished by reaching youth through new technological means and outlets, primarily Zoom. Youth were scheduled for weekly Zoom meetings for each of the programs. These meetings were used to help youth stay connected to each other as well as their adult mentors. Hands-on activity kits with supplies were provided to families to allow youth to complete activities during their Zoom meetings so that programming was more interesting.

Zoom meeting attendance by at-risk military youth and adult mentors was well-attended throughout the implementation of both programs. Youth were excited to continue programming and use Zoom during the initial phases of the programs. Video fatigue, often colloquially called “zoomed out,” was a youth and adult concern after weeks and subsequent months of Zoom meetings throughout the programs. Collaboration with the MHAFB youth center staff and leadership have been vital to the success of these 4-H youth development grants and programs.

Program Outcomes

Through the combined efforts of the 4-H Military Partnership Grant and the 4-H National Mentoring Grant, over 300 military youth participated in virtual positive youth development programs. By adapting and morphing the program to be delivered through Zoom, the continuity of the program was maintained and successful for at-risk youth. 4-H educational take-home kits were provided to 60 families, helping to enhance at-home learning opportunities for positive youth development.

The Future

Continued collaboration between UI Extension 4-H Youth Development and the MHAFB youth center is key to providing more youth development opportunities for at-risk military youth.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- National 4-H Council
- Mountain Home Air Force Base
- University of Idaho Extension, Elmore County

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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5-21-bstokes-zoom-youth-at-risk • 1/21