

# impact

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

## Idaho youth learn essential skills to apply and interview for their first job

### AT A GLANCE

Idaho youth gained knowledge and learned the importance of having soft skills to help them apply for a job, successfully interview and become valued employees.

### The Situation

Idaho youth need training and information on applying and interviewing for their first jobs.

Employers have commented that teenagers and first-time employees lack a basic understanding of the hiring process and essential soft skills needed to be successful in the workplace. When youth learn to develop a strong resume, start networking and have the required soft skills, they will be better prepared to find work. Idaho youth must begin creating a solid network since it is estimated that 85% of all jobs are filled by networking. Experts say that 80% of the jobs available are hidden and only advertised through networking. The lack of soft skills in youth, such as good communication, teamwork, conflict resolution and dependability, makes it harder for these teenagers and first-time employees to maintain employment. Applying and interviewing for a job for the first time may be intimidating, but it does not have to be. A little help and practice can make all the difference.

### Our Response

Employment Feud was created based on input from University of Idaho Extension, Madison County advisory committee. They expressed concerns about youth



Andrew Bingham presenting Employment Feud at 4-H youth ambassador's retreat. Photo by Lance Hansen.

and their lack of knowledge when seeking employment. To ensure that the advisory committee's concerns were addressed, several professionals that do the hiring at their companies were contacted. From their feedback, a game-based learning program was created based on the popular game show *Family Feud*. One hundred professionals from varying businesses and backgrounds were surveyed on job search-related topics, resumes, networking, interviewing and professionalism. Their responses were used to create an engaging, high-energy and memorable learning experience.

UI Extension educators across the state present Employment Feud in seven counties to youth ages 14-18. The objective is to teach Idaho youth what employers are seeking when hiring new employees. The youth

are taught the importance of networking, resumes, interviewing and professionalism. These job-related topics will help Idaho youth obtain employment and give them the "skills to pay the bills."

## Program Outcomes

Employment Feud has been presented to over 450 students across the state. Participants have indicated that their confidence regarding several employment-related skills has increased by participating. Some of the responses from the students have been, "I will make sure I research the job and the company when preparing for a job interview," "Practice for the job interview" and "I need to get a tie and learn how to tie it." The data collected shows that 91% of the participants plan to use what they have learned when applying for a job.

A five-point Likert scale was used (one = very low to five = very high), and means, standard deviations and paired sample *t* tests were computed from the data to identify changes in participants' knowledge and skills. Table 1 shows that participants had higher mean scores after participating in the program related to skills and confidence levels.

Table 1. Mean Rating of Knowledge and Skills in the Program

| Knowledge and Skills                   | Number of Respondents | Pretest Mean (SD) | Posttest Mean (SD) |
|--|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Ability to build a strong resume       | 285                   | 3.01 (1.09)       | 4.22 (0.86)        |
| Ability to demonstrate professionalism | 283                   | 3.58 (0.97)       | 4.59 (0.66)        |

|   |     |                    |                     |
|---|-----|--------------------|---------------------|
| Apply the learned skills in a job interview | 283 | 3.43 (1.04)        | 4.59 (0.85)         |
| Participate in volunteer activities         | 281 | 3.19 (1.11)        | 4.25 (0.85)         |
| <b>Summated mean score</b>                  |     | <b>3.30 (1.05)</b> | <b>4.41 ((0.76)</b> |

The paired sample *t* test (Table 2) shows a statistically significant difference in participants' overall knowledge and skills before and after program participation using the summated mean scores [*t* stat (*df* = 282;  $\alpha = .05$ ) = -24.41,  $p = .00007$ ].

Table 2. Paired Sampled *t* Test for Mean Rating of Knowledge and Skills

|                      | Difference in Mean | <i>df</i> | <i>t</i> Stat | Significant <i>p</i> -value rounded |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Knowledge and skills | 1.11               | 282       | -24.41        | .00007                              |

The data collected shows that Employment Feud significantly impacted the participants' knowledge and skills related to resumes, job interviewing, professionalism and participating in volunteer activities. Students who participated in this program have shared that what they learned helped them obtain employment. Employment Feud provides a unique learning experience that will continue to help Idaho teenagers prepare for and achieve success in their professional careers and become highly valued employees.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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