

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

Boundary County

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4-H Friday Friends provides all day programming for Boundary County youth

AT A GLANCE

4-H Friday Friends is an after school program that provides Boundary County families with an alternative option for their school age children on Fridays during the school year.

The Situation

Boundary County School District utilizes a 4-day school week; therefore, families in Boundary County need to find an alternative to traditional public education every Friday.

Boundary County is a small rural community with a population totaling just over 11,000 with a median household income of \$39,204 (\$14,000 below the national median). The county's poverty rate for 2014 was 16.7 percent.

Many families in the community are unable to afford traditional childcare and, even for those who can afford it, there are a limited number of programs available in our county.

Our Response

4-H Friday Friends was created in order to provide parents in our community with a safe, affordable, and educational alternative for their school-age children on Fridays during the school year.

4-H Friday Friends operates for 10 hours each Friday, allowing parents to drop off children as early as 7:30 a.m. and pick up children as late as 5:30 p.m. 4-H Friday Friends provides families in our community with low-cost educational programming where children learn by participating in hands-on activities in several areas including science, technology, art and health/nutrition.



4-H Friday Friends staff and participants on a field trip to the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge.

The program is flexible with an open enrollment. Families have the option to bring their children on any day and at any time. 4-H Friday Friends charges participants a small fee to help cover some of the program costs. The cost for one day is \$12, but there is a sliding fee scale for participants in order to allow lower income families to utilize the program.

The program is run by a part-time program coordinator and a part-time assistant with overall supervision provided by the University of Idaho Extension county 4-H/FCS Extension educator. There are also several volunteers that help out each week. 4-H Friday Friends invites people from the community to come in and share their knowledge and skills with the program participants. These community visitors include county library staff, firemen, volunteer ambulance staff, dentists, artists, policemen, storytellers, forest service staff and other community members with something to share.

Program Outcomes

Families participating in the program were asked to fill out an anonymous survey in order to provide participant feedback. Overall, the results of the survey were very positive and supported the community's need for the program.

All of the families stated that their children enjoy participating in 4-H Friday Friends. All of the families also felt their children gained valuable skills and knowledge while attending the program. All participants felt the enrollment fee was a reasonable price and that the program hours fit their schedule.

All of the survey participants felt that the program staff interacted well with both the children and their families. The families were also unanimous in stating that they planned to participate in the program next year and that they would recommend the program to other families.

When the survey participants were asked what their children would do if the program were not available, responses were quite varied. The responses included spending the day with extended family (30%), attending a daycare program designed for younger children (35%), and leaving their children at home (35%), as they would have no other option.

The Future

The program has existed for several years and was fully funded by the CYFAR grant from 2010-2015. Unfortunately, after the grant ended in 2015, there was no guaranteed funding source for the program outside of program rollover funds.

Local families were concerned this program was going to be discontinued, but Amy Robertson, the 4-H/FCS Extension educator for the county, was determined to find new sources of funding for this vital program. During 2015 and 2016, Robertson applied for six different grants and was successful in getting \$2,500 from the BNSF Foundation, \$2,500 from the Idaho Community Foundation, and \$13,000 from the Equinox Foundation. These monies, along with the funds generated from participant fees, have guaranteed the continuation of the program through 2017. The program is currently working to strengthen its partnership with the school district in order to obtain more permanent funding for the future.

4-H Friday Friends is also exploring the possibility of providing summer programming in the form of day camps. Robertson is applying for further grant funding and seeking local partnerships in order to make this possible.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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