Leadership Now! 4-H provides leadership opportunities when youth need them

AT A GLANCE
Beginning in middle-school, Idaho 4-H youth can now engage in leadership opportunities reaching from their local clubs, to regional experiences and continuing to statewide and national service.

The Situation
The engagement of pre-teen youth in decision making and leadership roles in youth organizations not only builds skills needed for life-long success but also keeps the youth engaged and active in the organization. Most youth organizations do not provide this type of opportunity until high school age. Idaho 4-H provides true leadership opportunities for younger youth through newly developed steering committees and the reconfigured Idaho 4-H State Teen Officer team.

Our Response
Due to the reorganization of Idaho 4-H teen programs, leadership opportunities for Idaho youth have increased significantly. Statewide leadership positions for Idaho 4-H teens have grown from 13 to 49 since the steering committees and the new Idaho 4-H state teen officer team were developed. Steering committees, made up primarily of youth, now plan, evaluate and facilitate all statewide teen programs. Idaho 4-H state teen officers teach at all statewide events, mentor other teens and participate in leadership development conferences like the National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C. Youth now have a leadership “ladder” throughout their 4-H career to help ensure reaching their leadership potential.

Program Outcomes
Traditionally 4-H youth are active at a young age in local club programs, but only a few participate at a regional or statewide level, and some even leave the program for other opportunities. Now, there is a new vision for teen programs — a premier program that offers a wide range of opportunities to a greater number of teens statewide through accessible, engaging, diverse and research-based experiences. Since its conception, a synergy has been developing amongst 4-H programs across Idaho. This growing synergy has expanded participation opportunities considerably for Idaho youth. Many are now transitioning from local leadership roles to regional, statewide and teen officer roles; extending their years of leadership and expanding the skills they acquire from the experience.
Specific leadership opportunities include:

**Know Your Government Conference:** 24 teens and 11 adults.
- Youths serve as legislators (six), judges (six), reporters (eight), speaker of the house, justice, news editor and video producer.
- Legislative youth research and write their own legislative bills.
- Judicial youth research and prepare a mock trial case.
- Reporter youth publish a print newsletter and various educational videos.
- Conference sessions are hosted by youth, and orientations for delegates and chaperones are facilitated by youth.
- Youth direct the planning agenda at the three-day summer planning meeting.

**Idaho 4-H State Teen Association Convention:** eight teens and eight adults.
- Youths contact University of Idaho academic departments to request and coordinate workshop classes.
- Youth develop promotional print materials and videos.
- Conference sessions are hosted by youth, orientations for delegates and chaperones are facilitated by youth.
- Youth direct the planning agenda at the three-day winter planning meeting.

Idaho 4-H ambassador program (district retreats [four] and the statewide ambassador summit): 12 teens and 12 adults.
- One youth and one adult partner at the local level to facilitate four district ambassador retreats.
- District retreat sessions are hosted by youth and youth teach several workshops at district retreats.
- Ambassador summit sessions are hosted by youth, orientations for delegates and chaperones are facilitated by youth.
- Youth develop promotional print materials and videos.
- Youth direct the planning agenda at the three-day summer planning meeting.

The Idaho 4-H State Teen Officer team was reconfigured into five youth roles that have a more structured statewide leadership presence and provide more opportunities at the national level. Since this change, the Idaho 4-H state teen officers have been invited to attend events on campus, speak with administrators and important stakeholders and teach at numerous 4-H teen and volunteer events across Idaho.

**The Future**

Leadership Now! Idaho 4-H teen programs will continue to provide opportunities for youth to become engaged in leadership at a younger age than other youth organizations. In addition to traditional club program leadership, youth can now reap the benefits of participation in exciting opportunities at the regional, state and national level.

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

*Donna R. Gillespie*, Regional Youth Development Educator • UI Extension 4-H Youth Development • 208-312-4109 • donna@uidaho.edu

*Nikki Dalton*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Bannock County • 208-236-7310 • nmdalton@uidaho.edu

*Suzann Dolecheck*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Twin Falls County • 208-734-9590 • sdolecheck@uidaho.edu

*Carrie Johnson*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Canyon County • 208-459-6003 • carriej@uidaho.edu

*Sharla Wilson*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Kootenai County • 208-446-1680 • swilson@uidaho.edu

*Gail Silkwood*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Benewah County • 208-245-2422 • gisilkwood@uidaho.edu

*Liliana Vega*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Ada County • 208-287-5900 • liliana@uidaho.edu

*Katie Hoffman*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Lemhi County • 208-756-2815 • khoffman@uidaho.edu

*Grace Wittman*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Cassia County • 208-848-9461 • gwittman@uidaho.edu

*Danielle Scott*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Nez Perce Reservation • 208-621-3514 • dnscott@uidaho.edu

*Rebecca Hutchings*, Extension Educator • UI Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • bhutchings@uidaho.edu

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