

## Military installation grants help youth at the Mountain Home Air Force Base

### AT A GLANCE

Two grants from the National 4-H Council bring FIRST Lego League, mentorship and robotics 4-H programs to at-risk youth housed on the Mountain Home Air Force Base.

### The Situation

Military youth in Elmore County are at-risk due to a variety of challenges associated with their parents serving in the Air Force. This includes academic problems, behavioral problems, social isolation, coping skills, sadness, depression, anxiety, apathy, stress and anger when dealing with a parent(s) who have or who are currently deployed. Additionally, military families move frequently and often experience difficulties surrounding deployment and reintegration into society. The 4-H youth development programs at the Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB) provide predictable programming and a safe environment for military youth to succeed in extracurricular educational projects.

The MHAFB Youth Center partners with the Boys and Girls Club of America and University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development to provide positive youth development programs to military youth on base.

### Our Response

Collaboration between the National 4-H Council and University of Idaho Extension brought two grants to military youth at the MHAFB. The two grants include:



Military 4-H youth from the MHAFB participate in a zip-lining trip in the Magic Valley during 2019. Photo: Jami Davis.

1) 4-H Military Partnership grant and 2) 4-H National Mentoring grant. The Military Partnership grant activities focus on youth citizenship, leadership, college readiness, healthy living, and science and technology. The National Mentoring grant pairs military youth with positive adult mentors who provide weekly 4-H activities focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Mentors also build relationships with military youth and their families to help support them through possible challenges.

The STEM based activities include FIRST Lego League, robotics, cooking, gardening, sewing, engineering, science and a myriad of other 4-H opportunities.

## Program Outcomes

Through the Military Partnership grant the 4-H program on the MHAFB facilitates six clubs, reaching over 300 at-risk military youth each year. Through the National Mentoring grant the 4-H program pairs more than 60 military youth with positive adult mentors who understand the difficulties associated with military life. Mentors are community involved volunteers who are looking to make an impact on youth at the MHAFB; the majority of mentors are affiliated with the Air Force.

The Military Partnership grant helped form a cooking club, an engineering/electronics club and two FIRST Lego League robotics teams, one of which participated in the local 4-H robotics competition. The National Mentoring grant allows military youth the opportunity to pair with a positive adult mentor while being provided with 4-H STEM-based activities.

The 4-H youth development programming, curriculum, partnership/mentor grants and activities help introduce military youth at the MHAFB to brand-new life experiences that otherwise would not have been possible, such as a Magic Valley ziplining trip and a Treasure Valley river rafting trip. Additionally, national 4-H curriculum is used by MHAFB Youth Center staff as part of their overall programming efforts.

Through these grants, a total of 360 at-risk youth were paired with positive adult role models through out-of-school learning, leadership experiences and educational 4-H youth development projects. These youth are nearly four times more likely to make contributions to their community, two times more likely to be civically active and participate in science programs during out-of-school time, and nearly two times more likely to make healthier choices.



Youth at the MHAFB Youth Center participate in a 4-H sewing project. Photo: Jami Davis.

## 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. The expansion of 4-H youth development events and activities through National 4-H Council grant opportunities must be explored in the future to secure the continued partnerships already in existence on the MHAFB.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Collaboration with the Mountain Home Air Force Base Youth Center staff and leadership have been vital to the success of these 4-H youth development grants and programs on the MHAFB.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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