

4-H Afterschool in **Douglas County** is a partnership with the Superior School District, the Solon Springs School District, the 4-H Adult Leader's Association, and other community agencies. Depending on the program, kindergartners through fifth graders meet either weekly or bi-monthly from September through May in six elementary schools. Clubs meet between 1-1/2 to 2 hours. 4-H curriculum that we've



used includes Naturespace, Palette of Fun, Recycling, Entomology, Winter Travel, Adventures, Foods & Nutrition, and Theatre Arts. We also have utilized team building, character education, and healthy

lifestyles curriculum. 4-H teens, Afterschool staff, volunteers, and Extension staff lead clubs. We are currently serving over 250 youth in these clubs.

One unique aspect of our 4-H Afterschool program is that we have several different program structures. Three of our clubs are part of 21st Century Learning Centers and are funded by grants. Two other clubs are sponsored and funded by the Adult Leaders Association. The last club is a community club that meets after school so that more youth may participate in the program.

Our 4-H Afterschool clubs include many of the same activities that community clubs offer. The meetings include educational and recreational components, pledges, and snack. Youth participate in project work, community service projects, and county 4-H events. We also bring in special speakers and presentations that have addressed

cultural and ethnic diversity, community and personal safety, music, and dance. Members also share projects and activities with their parents at special Family Nights that are offered



quarterly. All Afterschool club members receive the monthly 4-H newsletter and special flyers promoting upcoming events. We also communicate with families through school newsletters.

We have worked diligently to facilitate participation in other 4-H and community events by Afterschool members. We are fortunate that our Leaders Association supports 4-H Afterschool both financially and philosophically. The Association also hoped that Afterschool members would participate in other 4-H activities. I think a defining moment was at a recent Cultural Arts Festival when the performers stood up to give their name and the name of their club. "Reba" stood up and proudly gave her name and that she was from the Northern Lights Afterschool Club. It was very gratifying to the Leaders Association. 36% of all Afterschool members have participated in at least one other 4-H event this past year.

Participation has included Junior Camp, Cultural Arts Festival, Family Overnight, Day Camps, exhibiting at the fair, and National 4-H Week events. Members have also worked at the Dairy Bar during Fair Week. Each year, more and more Afterschool club members become involved in other 4-H activities.

Our Afterschool clubs face several challenges. Funding for the 21st Century Afterschool Programs is a constant challenge. Staff and volunteers also come and go so training staff is an issue we are always dealing with. The two 4-H sponsored Afterschool clubs are volunteer driven and it is difficult to find people who can volunteer at that time on a consistent basis. It has also been a challenge to get families involved in the clubs.

While our 4-H Afterschool clubs face challenges, I think it's safe to say that the benefits outweigh any obstacles we face. One grandmother of a member



commented during the fair, "Hannah's Afterschool club offered the chance to be included". We are able to provide 4-H opportunities to many underserved youth in our community through 4-H Afterschool.