

Douglas County 4-H

is the youth development program of Douglas County & the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension

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Douglas County 4-H Youth Development Program

2008 Impact Report

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills.

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4-H Members Report Gaining Life Skills

Each fall 4-H members are encouraged to summarize their accomplishments via a report and interview process with the Board of Directors. Here are a few comments from 4-H members who did so this year:

"My 4-H leadership experiences have helped me to become a better leader and more importantly, a better listener. It is extremely necessary for a leader to listen to fellow club members...to brainstorm the best possible ideas to resolve the conflicting problems or just improve the club." – 9th grade girl

"Being able to help other kids learn more about horses and chickens was one of the most enjoyable things I did this year. It's so fun to see their faces light up when they learn and understand something for the first time." – Post high school girl

"I think 4-H has made me a better leader and helped me talk to more people I otherwise would never talk to. I have made more friends and am an overall better person. I have learned how to take charge and lead when I have to." – 11th grade boy

"By working with and around horses, I really do think I will have a career with them." – 10th grade girl

"Belonging to 4-H is not just participating in the planned activities and bringing your items to the fair. It is also taking on responsibilities within your clubs and helping with the Douglas County 4-H organization." – 8th grade girl

"4-H has broadened my horizons by giving me the opportunity to do things I couldn't otherwise (trips, leadership roles). Through my 4-H projects I have had a reason to really try and excel in different areas and interests." – Post high school boy

4-H Members Learn Leadership Skills

4-H members seeking leadership roles are elected as officers of their 4-H clubs in the fall. These Presidents, Vice Presidents, Treasurers, and Secretaries are invited to participate in "Club Officer Training" in November, taught by 4-H Educator Sarah Wilcox. During this hands-on training, youth discuss leadership attributes, learn officer roles and responsibilities, and practice parliamentary procedure by making trail mix. Wilcox also teaches them how to organize their club meetings by creating agendas, yearly calendars, and incorporating business, education, and recreation at each meeting. At the end of the training they play Club Officer Jeopardy.

This year, eight officers and three 4-H leaders representing four clubs participated in the training. All of the youth reported that the training was useful in helping them learn the responsibilities they have in their officer roles, use parliamentary procedure, and organize their club meetings.

When asked what they learned that they intend to use in their clubs, responses included:
 "How to better organize and carry out meetings."
 "To take better control of talkative members."
 "That being an officer is fun and easy."



4-H to Address America's Critical Need in Science, Engineering, and Technology



At present America faces a significant educational challenge: Our young people are not prepared with the necessary science, engineering, and technology workforce skills to compete in the 21st century. Research shows that only 18% of high school seniors are considered proficient in science and a mere 5% of college undergraduates earn degrees in science and engineering. In the next decade, our nation will face a significant workforce shortage in the science, engineering, and technology fields unless this trend is reversed.

4-H has always had a science focus, from animal science to plant science, environmental science, mechanical science, and food science. These days, 4-H members can also explore science through robotics, GIS/GPS mapping, model rocketry, web design, and much more. 4-H Afterschool Club members have been getting excited about science through introductory 4-H Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) projects. Last spring youth experimented with chemistry using household substances to make dancing spaghetti, shiny pennies, and mysterious mud. They also built model rockets out of straws and balloons.

More SET activities are being planned for 2009, including a week-long "4-H Gateway Academy" for middle school students. Douglas County 4-H hopes to attract new adult volunteers to help establish SET-focused club meetings. If you have ideas about how you or others can help give our youth more opportunities for hands-on scientific learning, please contact Sarah Wilcox at 395-1363.

Creativity Flourishes at the Annual 4-H Cultural Arts Festival

4-H offers over 80 arts and communication projects distributed over three broad categories: visual arts, performing arts, and communications. Research shows 4-H is different from arts and communication programs offered in school, private lessons, church, and community organizations because of opportunities to interact with new people, more choices and freedom in creativity and expression, and a more nurturing, comfortable setting in which to explore, take risks, and develop one's creativity, self-confidence and leadership.

Each spring Douglas County 4-H members participate in a Cultural Arts Festival at Northwestern Elementary School. This year's feedback included:

What did you learn about yourself today?

- Reading my story makes me feel good.
- Don't be nervous.
- I can do better if I try.

Why is the Cultural Arts Festival important to you?

- I learn new things to make and do.
- Gives homeschoolers a great venue for performing and speaking.
- It's a lot of fun!



4-H Clubs Learn Financial Accountability

Seventeen 4-H leaders and several youth attended a financial workshop organized and taught by Sarah Wilcox in spring. The workshop taught best practices for handling 4-H money, reviewed fund raising policies, and provided tools to help youth treasurers keep safe and responsible financial records.

Evaluation results showed that attendees increased their understanding of all financial topics at the training. The highest increases in learning were:

- New federal laws require 4-H groups raising less than \$25,000 to file a 990-N e-postcard annually.
- Money raised should be spent in the same year.
- Best practices for managing 4-H money and fund raising.
- Resources available to help youth treasurers keep financial records for a 4-H club.

Wilcox created a "4-H Treasurer Resource Packet" that was shared with all workshop participants. Some packet contents include receipts, deposit slips, invoices, and a sample budget and treasurer's report with brief descriptions of when to use each item.

Best practices for handling 4-H money include obtaining an EIN, promptly depositing money in a bank account, having two signatures on checks, writing receipts for monies received, having members approve a budget and vote on expenditures, recording decisions in minutes, and understanding that 4-H funds are publicly accountable.

The Board has approved a new policy that requires all 4-H groups to submit a Fund Raising or Solicitation Request to the 4-H Board of Directors before seeking funds from the community. This helps ensure that money raised goes toward an approved goal with a definite plan.

4-H Camp Counselors Gain Leadership Skills

Douglas and Washburn County 4-H hold "Junior Camp" together for three days each June. This year the State 4-H Program implemented a new policy that requires 4-H camp counselors to receive six hours of youth development training prior to camp.

Sarah Wilcox created a pre-training survey and used the counselors' responses to determine where the most need for training existed. For example, there was a strong need for "helping campers develop a sense of group ownership." Wilcox helped counselors assemble camp backpacks that they used to select welcoming activities for their cabin groups, lead group games and activities with their campers during down times, and assist their cabin groups in selecting and performing a "4-H appropriate" camp fire skit.

A post-camp survey determined that, on average, counselors learned the most about the following topics at the pre-camp trainings:

- Their roles and responsibilities as counselors.
- The significant role teamwork plays during camp.
- How to help campers develop a sense of group ownership.
- Effective ways to fill "down time."

When asked what one thing learned at counselor training most helped them at camp, counselors said:

- "How to handle children who had inappropriate attitudes and behavior."
- "The differences in different age groups of kids."
- "That I knew the other counselors before attending camp."

- "The kids always come first. This one rule helped me make decisions, like what would be more fun or more helpful to the campers."
- "How to 'be there' for campers when they're having a hard time."