



Iron County

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UWEX AmeriCorps*VISTA Success Story

4-H Trailblazers: A Generation Making Healthy Choices

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"My favorite part of today was riding through the river!"

Quote by Saxon Trailblazer

The 4-H Trailblazer program continued in 2009 in Iron County for its third year. It was another successful year for the youth involved in the 4-H Trailblazer program. Our program targets middle school aged youth and teaches them how to become more active and knowledgeable about how to make healthy life choices. The program encourages physical activity by providing youth with weekly bike rides ranging from ten to twenty miles. On these rides we provide healthy snacks while stressing their importance in everyday life. We promote bicycle safety as another way of keeping healthy. Every session we practiced safety by using proper hand signals, riding on the right side of the road, and wearing a helmet. We also encouraged them to check the ABC's (air pressure, brakes, and chain) of their bikes before each trip to ensure a safe ride.

The 4-H Trailblazer program started due to a study that found that 22% of Hurley School District students were obese and another 11% were at risk for obesity. These Iron County levels are higher than the state average. Low levels of physical activity and unhealthy food choices were identified as habits to be addressed. Trailblazers supported the Iron County Health Department community strategic planning goals to reduce the impact of chronic disease by encouraging physical activity and healthy food choices. Our main goal in leading this program was to encourage each youth participant to choose healthier living habits.

The 4-H Trailblazer program continues to be successful in attracting a high number of Iron County youth. This year the program had a total of 32 youth from three areas. We were really excited about the high number of youth we were able to work with. Besides our weekly biking sessions we offered extra activities including a day of hiking on the Uller Trail and a canoe trip.

The variety of extra activities that we provided throughout the year taught Trailblazers the many different types of exercise. In fact, one Trailblazer stated, “through 4-H this summer, I learned hiking is exercise!” We were excited that we were able to demonstrate one more way to obtain a healthy lifestyle.

As leaders we definitely saw a change in the Trailblazers choice of foods in their lunch. Many went from packing chips and energy drinks in their lunch to bragging about their vegetables and juices they packed. This change is illustrated by a Trailblazer’s report, “I learned to pack better stuff like oranges and things without a lot of sugar.” The Trailblazers noticed the impact the healthy food choices have on them. One youth reported in their evaluation survey, “I have more energy if I eat healthy.” Because of this 4-H program, 80% of the youth said they feel better about themselves because they eat healthy foods and exercise. Not only were we able to teach the Trailblazers healthy lifestyle during our program, but we also were able to impact how they make healthy choices through their lifetime. According to our survey, 87% of the youth said they know they can make many choices to live in a healthy way because of 4-H this summer.

Getting proper physical activity was another positive outcome of this program. The weekly bike trips, many hiking experiences, and canoe trip allowed 90% of the youth in Trailblazers to report that they were more physically active because of the 4-H Trailblazer program. One Trailblazer found the biking so rewarding that he commented “I’d rather be doing this than watching TV any day.”



“My favorite part of the day was hiking.” –Mercer Trailblazer



“I ride my bike with 4-H and see new places to ride so I can bike more.” –Hurley Trailblazer