

impact

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4-H teaches young leaders how to take charge of their clubs

AT A GLANCE

Club officers in the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program learn valuable skills to take back to their clubs and be better leaders.

The Situation

Building leadership skills in young people is an important part of the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program. According to the newly released results of the Youth Voice Survey by the National 4-H Council, teamwork and leadership are in the top four skills teens identified as most important to building the character of young people.

Youth leadership opportunities at the club level are often the first steps 4-H members take towards building important skills that will aid them in future careers. Members of 4-H clubs elect new club officers yearly. These young leaders need guidance on how to run effective meetings, what their roles include and how to be leaders. Adult 4-H volunteers approached the University of Idaho Extension office in Canyon County with requests for more information on how to train club officers.

The 4-H professionals in the county have observed a decrease in 4-H members attending leadership opportunities outside of the county. Combined with the desire of 4-H volunteers to have club officer training, leadership training at the county level was needed to build basic leadership skills and to encourage youth to grow their leadership skills.



4-H volunteer, Debbie Lowber, leads a team building activity in Canyon County.

Our Response

In 2020, Canyon County's 4-H Extension educator collaborated with a long time 4-H volunteer to develop a club officer training that could be conducted on a county level or on an as needed basis for 4-H clubs. The objectives of the training were to develop an understanding of leadership, teamwork, officer position responsibilities, parliamentary procedure and how to run a meeting. The training needed to be interactive and engaging, give youth skills and tools they can incorporate into their meetings, and include practice.

The developed training includes many activities in a two-hour time block. Youth participate in teambuilding and icebreaker activities, discuss the characteristics of a good leader, break into club officer position

groups to discuss the duties of their positions and then present those duties to the whole group, review parliamentary procedure and the 4-H Club meeting wheel, and participate in a mock 4-H business meeting where they practice what they learned.

Program Outcomes

Since 2020, five countywide trainings have been offered. These trainings have also included adult volunteers who also observe to learn. Many of these trainings have included 4-H members and adults from surrounding counties.

In 2025, all 25 4-H members who attended the training completed the post-training survey. Participating youth were from Canyon, Gem/Boise, Ada and Payette counties.

Members were serving in the following 4-H club officer positions:

- President (seven)
- Vice-President (four)
- Secretary (two)
- Treasurer (three)
- Sergeant at Arms (one)
- Historian (four)
- Committee Chair (one)
- Multiple Positions within the club (three)

Youth were asked to rate four statements with one of five options: Yes, Somewhat, Unsure, Not really and No. Results were:

- I know what it takes to be a good leader. (Yes = 92.0%, Somewhat = 8.0%)

- I know the duties of the club officer position I am in. (Yes = 96.0%, Somewhat = 4.0%)
- I understand the importance of working in a team. (Yes = 96.0%, Somewhat = 4.0%)
- I know my role during a club meeting. (Yes = 84.0%, Somewhat = 8.0%, Unsure = 4.0%, Not really = 4.0%)

These survey results indicate that youth understand what it takes to be a good leader, the duties of their club officer position and the importance of working together as a team. Improvements to the training can be made to ensure that youth understand their role during a club meeting.

Youth were asked to share something they learned in the training: “I learned how to listen to a large group of individuals.”; “I learned that a leader is an example to others.”; and “How much collaboration is needed.”

After the training, a 4-H professional in another county reported that youth that attended the training incorporated the web activity into their meetings. A 4-H volunteer reported her officer team discussed plans for the club on their hour drive home. This shows that 4-H members that attended this training immediately started implementing what they learned.

The Future

Club officer trainings will continue to be held each year. Adjustments will be made based off youth survey results and a lesson plan is being developed to share with other counties that have requested it.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Debbie Lowber, Canyon County 4-H volunteer

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Carrie Clarich, 4-H Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Canyon County • 208-459-6003 • carriej@uidaho.edu

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