



Situation:

Positive youth development is the conceptual foundation of the 4-H Youth Development program – helping young people develop critical life skills universally recognized as the essential foundation for healthy and productive adult lives.

Young adults are better prepared to acquire and retain employment, live on their own, raise a family, and participate in their community when they learn and practice basic skills through 4-H Youth Development. These include effective communication, goal setting, decision making, problem solving, leadership and conflict resolution.

Youth benefit from participation in well-supervised, high quality out-of-school time experiences, including 4-H groups, camps and after-school programs. A recent New Hampshire study of state- and federally-funded, academically-focused afterschool programs found that more than half of regularly attending youth improved both academically and behaviorally (Frankel, Streitburger, & Goldman, 2008).

UNH Cooperative Extension's Response:

With a focus on belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, the 4-H Youth Development program works with community volunteers to help youth develop this essential skill base. Many 4-H projects have a strong foundation in the sciences, helping youth to apply those concepts they are learning in school. Becky Levesque, 4-H Youth Development Educator assisted Belknap County communities in forming collaborative approaches to meeting needs for quality programs during out-of-school time. In addition to traditional, small group 4-H clubs, this includes developing partnerships to establish or enhance after-school programs in Alton, Belmont, Sanbornton and Laconia, and working with youth referred by the courts.

- There are 93 active, screened and trained 4-H volunteers involved in mentoring 229 youth in small groups throughout the county, where children are learning important life skills in a safe, caring group environment. These volunteers contribute an estimated average of 75 hours of their time in the course of year. This represents a cost benefit to the county of \$136,082 when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org).
- Forty-nine young people, ages 8-14, attend Alton's 4-H After-school program, the Winnepesaukee Winners 4-H Club, where they engage in projects of interest including community service and leadership development. This partnership between parents, Alton Community Youth activities, UNH Cooperative Extension, PlusTime NH, and Alton Central School resulted in expansion from a one day per week program to two to three days per week. In addition to the initial \$7,000 Rural Youth Development grant received in 2004, the school provides free use of the facilities, free finger printing for volunteers, and \$1,000 for operations in 2009. In 2007, a new director and five volunteers from the community were recruited and trained to provide programming during the 2008-09 school year.
- A Belknap County 4-H Teen Club was established to provide mentoring in leadership, community service, and parliamentary procedure for any county youth. Additional collaborative efforts are being discussed to support the club's volunteer leaders through local and county resources, including Belknap County's juvenile justice professionals, Genesis, the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families, and others. These efforts would ensure that very high risk youth referred to the program avoid behaviors that might lead to further court involvement.
- In 2008, the Teen Club learned about Global Positioning Systems (GPS) with the help of a \$500 grant from the 4-H Foundation of New Hampshire. The funds supported the purchase of two GPS units. The units and training are available to all youth programs throughout the county.

How We Made a Difference:

UNH Cooperative Extension's 4-H Youth Development program makes an impact on the youth, families and communities they serve. Youth who have participated in 4-H programs cite their experiences as important educational experiences: *"Over the past six years, 4-H has helped me to become the person I am today...I feel the greatest gift that I will take away from my 4-H experience is the confidence and resources to achieve my life goals."* and *"4-H is a major part of my life...participation has helped me become a stronger leader, a listener and most importantly it has helped me to achieve goals that I have set for myself."*

- In 2008, 114 of the 4-H youth participants (50%) said they had increased their knowledge and skills related to successful community action, 61 (27%) indicated they had demonstrated an increase in a specific life skill, and 50 volunteers (54%) said they have a greater understanding of positive youth development practices and plan to adopt them in their work with 4-H youth.
- Two trained adult volunteers with the Belknap County 4-H Teen Club successfully engaged teens from Laconia, Gilmanton, Meredith, Barnstead, Gilford, Laconia, Tilton and New Hampton. These volunteers, with training and support from collaborating partners such as community agencies, organizations, courts, volunteers, and professionals, worked with a group of youth, including four court-referred teens in 2007. Using data from the Belknap County Citizens Council on Children and Families (Juvenile Justice Report Card, 2007), effective community-based early interventions with court-involved youth can reduce costs significantly – from \$49,410 per youth for four to five months at the Sununu Youth Service Center to \$3,462 per youth for three to 12 months of community-based early intervention supervision. The participation of four court-involved youth in the Belknap County 4-H Teen Club has the potential to reduce costs of juvenile justice services from \$197,640 to \$13,848, an estimated savings of \$183,792 for a three to 12 month period.
- The Belknap County 4-H Teen Club completed an innovative service project as a result of learning to use GPS units. The youth produced a "Google Earth" map of the 4-H fairgrounds in Belmont. From this map they designed a "theme park map" printed and distributed to fair-goers. Their project, completed at no cost to the county or 4-H Fair Association, initiated discussions between the 4-H Fair Board and the Belknap County 4-H Foundation, with assistance from Andrew Fast, County Forestry Educator, to develop an overdue long-range plan for the fairgrounds property. Not only did the project provide opportunities for Belknap County youth to learn technical, leadership, and team working skills, it also provided an important community service and will serve as a model program for other counties in NH.
- The Belknap County Department of Corrections collaborated with 4-H volunteers to market fresh vegetables from the farm at the 4-H Fair, generating \$250 with proceeds divided between the partnering groups.

References:

Belknap County Juvenile Justice Report Card. (2007). Restorative Justice: Making a Difference.
http://www.bccj.org/PDFs/JJR/BCCJ_Report_Card_2007.pdf

Frankel, S.L., Ph.D.; Streitburger, K.; & Goldman, E. (2008). Afterschool Learning: A Study of Academically Focused Afterschool Programs in New Hampshire. Available online at
http://www.plustime.org/_pdf/Plus_Time_Programs.pdf

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