

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.

Almost half of Carroll County towns (8 of 17 towns) rank among New Hampshire communities with the greatest barriers and fewest opportunities for successful outcomes for children and youth (Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book 2008). Albany, Bartlett, Conway, Effingham and Ossipee are among the 27 New Hampshire towns with the lowest ranking, placing a unique burden on families, organizations and institutions within the county to overcome barriers to opportunities for children to thrive (Kids Count New Hampshire Data Book 2008).

Youth benefit from participation in well-supervised, high quality out-of-school time experiences, including 4-H groups, camps and afterschool 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)

Extension's Public Value:

Without the basic skills of effective communication, goal setting, decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution, young adults have a difficult time acquiring and retaining employment, living on their own, and starting a family. Through 4-H, screened and trained volunteer leaders guide youth in acquiring and practicing critical life skills in safe program environments that meet the basic needs of youth and give them the skills, confidence, and character to become healthy contributing adults.

UNHCE Response:

With a focus on belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, the 4-H Youth Development program works with community volunteers to help youth develop these essential skills. Many 4-H projects have a strong foundation in the sciences, helping youth apply concepts they learn in school. UNH Cooperative Extension, in collaboration with other organizations, develops and delivers educational programs that equip youth at risk with skills they need to lead positive, productive, contributing lives.

State and Carroll County Extension 4-H Youth Development staff also developed partnerships to establish or enhance afterschool programs in Ossipee. Through a partnership with National 4-H Council, JCPenney Afterschool, and community afterschool programs, youth attending the School's Out! Program in Ossipee have benefited from 4-H programs and activities offered at the center.

Fifty children participated during the 2007-08 school year through a \$20,000 grant from the National 4-H Council and JCPenney 4-H Afterschool Program. This program requires a partnership between the afterschool program and the county 4-H Youth Development program, and targets children who wouldn't be able to attend without this support. Another \$46,440 helped 103 children attend during the 2008-09 school year. With a focus on youth with limited resources and parental involvement, the project gives these youth the chance to learn, create, problem solve and experience life skills that otherwise wouldn't have been available to them.

UNH Cooperative Extension worked collaboratively with partners to receive a planning grant from the N.H. Dept. of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Justice for the Carroll County Juvenile Justice Project. Eighteen months of funding provided the opportunity to work collaboratively, creating a plan to better meet the needs of youth at-risk. A comprehensive needs assessment that included input from youth, parents, law enforcement, schools and community organizations was completed. Since the project ended, staff were hired through the Community Action Program, Inc. to continue implementing planned goals and strategies.

There are 43 active, screened and trained 4-H volunteers mentoring 129 youth in small groups throughout the county, where children learn important life skills in a safe, caring group environment. Another 263 Carroll County youth participated in 4-H activities through school enrichment programs. Volunteers working with these clubs contributed approximately 2,231 hours of their time during the 2007-08 school year. This represents a cost benefit to the county of \$43,527 when calculated at the 2007 value of \$19.51/hour for volunteer time (independentsector.org).

How We Make a Difference:

- Students and families of Ossipee benefited from the JCPenney 4-H Afterschool Mini Grants. The funds made it possible for 56 students to receive "JCPenney" scholarships. Without the scholarships, many of these students wouldn't have had the opportunity to participate in the School's Out! Afterschool Program at Ossipee Central School. The grant also provided JC Penney gift cards in the amount of \$50 distributed to the original 50 students. These provided a unique opportunity for low-income families to purchase school supplies and clothing for their children. Staff report the children were walking proudly through the school, stopping them to say "thank-you" and show what they picked out with their JCPenney card. Staff also received numerous "thank-you" cards and letters from both parents and students. A staff person from the Schools Out! Program wrote, *"On behalf of the children and families of Ossipee, and the School's Out! Program at Ossipee Central School, I would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation for the work you are doing to make afterschool activities a reality for our youth and families most in need. You have made a very real, very positive impact on 56 students in our community and the experiences these children have had will impact their growth, development, character and education for years to come!"*
- The Schmidt Foundation agreed to initial financial support for three years to the Carroll County Juvenile Justice Project, now known as the Carroll County Collaborative. This will allow service providers and citizens, including youth, an opportunity to organize and support local youth needs. The collaborative strives to ensure a continuum of community-based services, ranging from prevention to intervention, follow out-of-home placements.
- In 2008, nine 4-H volunteers from Carroll County reported virtually all youth participants they work with had adopted a new skill learned from 4-H, and 90 percent (80 out of 90) successfully adopted new skills learned from 4-H. One 4-H volunteer noted, *"She has developed more skills and confidence. As she gets older she is more willing to take risks with these skills. She is very willing to help out fellow club members by sharing her time, skills and knowledge with them. She was unsure of handling horses...the more time she spends with them, the more confident she becomes."* A majority of 4-H youth influenced the community through their 4-H work, and two-thirds made a noticeable impact on the community. Another volunteer noted, *"The impact is that people in our community can see a great youth group at work. The officials were pleased to be served by 4-Hers and were very complimentary."*

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