



4-H Youth Development 2004 Report

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The mission of 4-H youth development is to provide positive experiences for youth and adults to develop their individual potential as caring and contributing members of an ever-changing world. To facilitate this, 4-H staff are involved in community efforts in youth development as well as administering the 4-H club program in the county.

Community Development – *Helping communities develop and sustain comprehensive programs, using sound practices that meet local youth needs and improve quality of life.*

After school programs are becoming important in many communities. Extension assisted the Hinsdale After school Coalition, strengthening their after school initiative and successfully applying for their \$89,900 5 year Drug Free Communities grant. We will help with staff training, program planning, evaluation assistance and 4-H curriculum for this project. We are also providing staff training and curriculum for Winchester's 21st Century Learning Center grant. Four other programs are using 4-H curriculum. In addition, in collaboration with PlustimeNH, an after school network is being organized to help programs in the county share techniques and training, and possibly collaborate on some regional grants.

Extension assisted school districts with their Youth Risk Behavior Survey results. The parent newsletter on Communicating with Your Teen was adapted for publication in *Parent Express* reaching 12,000 in the region. The Keene High Principal asked us to help do strategic action planning. As a result, three Safe and Drug Free Schools Community Partnerships were formed that are revising the disciplinary policies of SAU 29, creating a district wide youth risk prevention plan, and developing outreach processes to parents of teens in the district. Already this fall, 100 parents of freshman were called and informed about resources and supports available to them, and two grants were received to create a local parent resource web site.

As a presenter for the Partners in Prevention speaker series sponsored by the Monadnock Action Network with Youth, we gave 8 presentations on Understanding Adolescence reaching 184 people. Evaluations showed that 75% increased their knowledge of adolescent changes, behaviors, and needs; 73% increased their ability to work in positive ways with teens, and 87% intend to improve their role modeling and supervision of teens. A 7th grade teacher commented, "This gave me new perspective in working with students."

Extension gave two presentations on Strategic Planning and Program Evaluation for the Monadnock United Way Brown Bag Lunch series reaching 81 people. Evaluations showed increase in knowledge and intent to use the information in planning and evaluation. One participant commented, "What a gold mine these have been! I have used the information to rewrite two grants I am working on." Another reported using the information in their organization's current strategic planning process.

We are involved in ongoing collaboration with a variety of community organizations to address youth issues of the county. These agencies include: Cheshire County Human Services, Cheshire County Community Board, Council for a Healthier Community, Hinsdale Prevention Coalition, Keene Youth Services, Monadnock Family Services, Monadnock United Way, New Futures, NH DADAPR, NH Teen Institute, Phoenix House, Plustime NH, SAU 29 Safe and Drug Free Schools, SamariTEENS, Winchester CAST, and the YMCA.

Positive Youth Development - *providing training in positive youth development which helps insure high quality leadership for 4-H Clubs, school enrichment and after school programs and other community based youth programs. The focus in positive youth development is to help youth learn and practice life skills, those abilities that they will need throughout their life.*

In the Cheshire 4-H program 71 adults served as 4-H leaders reporting an average of 98 hours of direct involvement with youth. Another 178 people volunteered in roles such as activity assistants, judges, and chaperones. There were 263 youth enrolled in 25 4-H clubs and 1447 youth participated in school enrichment programs. An additional 198 youth were involved in longer special interest programs such as environmental awareness and diversity awareness.

In evaluating the impact of the 4-H club program, members showed significant increases in development of the following life skills:

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| 82% Using a variety of ways to reach goals | 55% Connecting with positive peers |
| 82% Using suggestions to improve skills | 55% Solving conflicts in ways that are not hurtful to other |
| 73% Gathering and organizing information | |
| 73% Confidence in public speaking | |

4-H members are expected to do service projects. 93% of the youth reported being involved in projects averaging 10 hours each. Some projects this past year included: Maplewood Pen Pals, Christmas support for various charities, assistance at community suppers, read-a-thons, recycling clothes, roadside pickup, support of various community charities including the Keene Community Kitchen, animal visits to elderly or youth with disabilities, and elderly yard work and winter sanding.

Some of the strengths of the 4-H club program are seen in the achievements of the youth involved. Cheshire had 21 youth attending NH Teen Conference, 20 youth selected for state and 11 youth selected for regional events in communications, 36 were selected for regional project opportunities, 49 youth competed on the state level in knowledge bowls with 3 going on to nationals, 28 were selected for state judging competition with 4 going on to nationals, 2 teens attended National 4-H Congress and one teen was selected to represent NH at National 4-H Conference.

County support for the 4-H club program is used for professional staff that oversee the program, train volunteers, and insure that the curriculum is based upon solid youth development research. Funds for educational materials, recognition, and opportunities for the volunteers and youth participants comes from the Cheshire 4-H Council, a non-profit entity. The 4-H Kitchen at the fairgrounds serves not only as a fundraiser for the Cheshire 4-H Council, but also as hands-on experience for youth in applying workforce skills. \$5000 was raised by the 184 members and 64 adults volunteering to work in the kitchen. This money was used to purchase educational materials,

support 14 county events, send teens and volunteers to conferences and events, and recognize program participants.

The value of the 4-H program can be seen by these comments of parents, youth, and others:

- “My child has learned to be a leader by watching his leaders and taking on more responsibility.”
- “The 4-Hers have learned to take risks. They are individuals in their ideas and actions.”
- “At 4-H everyone is one big family. There are challenges but support is always available.”
- “4-H has helped me become a caring person and has shown me how rewarding that can be.”
- “There have been a number of best experiences as a 4-H volunteer from watching a timid youth develop into a confident adult to watching a child’s face light up when they realize what they themselves have accomplished.”