

“Learning to Serve” - An Important Component of 4-H

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4-H youth are encouraged to practice generosity through community service learning projects. Many stories of meaningful contributions are reported each year by 4-H clubs, 4-H afterschool programs, and individual 4-H members. During the past year, almost 100 4-H groups across New Hampshire reported that their youth members planned and carried out 319 different projects. Another 273 projects were done by individual 4-H members. An estimated 19,512 hours were voluntarily contributed by 3,781 youth and adults to make these projects possible.

Through these projects, youth learn many important life skills, including planning, organization, time management, communication and team work. Leaders of these 4-H groups reported three-quarters of the participating members now know more about their community, and most youth are more confident in helping others.

The majority of members also learned to follow a process to make decisions and accept their share of responsibility. Thirty-one members submitted individual reports, with most indicating they could make a plan to reach their goal, and organize an activity that includes others.

Many projects these 4-H youth have taken on made an important impact on an individual, a group in need, or in the community. One group was able to rescue a young neglected colt from a local horse auction, and he is now starting to trust them through their rehabilitation efforts. In Grafton County, we have the county-wide Kids to Kids project. 4-H'ers and friends create twin size quilts that are given to youth who are displaced from their home due to disasters, fires or family breakups. To date, over 150 quilts have been distributed through police departments and social service agencies.

A majority of groups around the state took on the challenges of food security in their communities by helping at food pantries, raising gardens and donating the food, or setting up a food shelf in their school to regularly collect canned goods. One 4-H afterschool group provides meals each week to a variety of families needing assistance.

Intergenerational communication is being enhanced with such examples as youth visiting seniors, helping the elderly with yard work, and playing games or reading to nursing home residents. One entrepreneurial group performed a service to citizens of the community by providing a "grab and go" meal for those attending the annual town meeting.

Do you want to know more about how your youth group can do community service learning projects? Visit our website at www.extension.unh.edu or contact the 4-H Youth Development program at the Grafton County office of UNH Cooperative Extension at 603-787-6944 or email: Kathleen.jablonski@unh.edu.