

impact

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AmeriCorps instructors expand programs to youth in Twin Falls County

AT A GLANCE

Community partnerships with UI Extension AmeriCorps instructors provide opportunities to expand quality educational programs to youth in out-of-school settings.

The Situation

Organizations serving youth in Twin Falls County are continually looking for partners willing to provide quality Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) programs in out-of-school settings. Boys & Girls Club Magic Valley serve over 3,000 members annually, averaging 400 youth/day in 15-18 weekly camps in their summer program. Due to limited community opportunities for students outside of the school day, Hansen School District currently maintains a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant to provide a safe, supervised environment for students when school is not in session. These include programs that introduce students to multiple enrichment opportunities. UI Extension, Twin Falls County has built ongoing partnerships with both organizations, to provide much needed quality programs, while new partnership opportunities continue to emerge.

Our Response

Through continuing partnerships and financial support from Boys & Girls Club Magic Valley, Hansen School District and Twin Falls County, UI Extension secured one full-time, two half-time and one quarter-time AmeriCorps instructors. The focus of the AmeriCorps instructors was to expand current and create



Youth in the Hansen Shooting Sports/Hunter Education SPIN project receiving their Hunter Education Certificates.

new youth STEAM programs with current community partners and expand programs to additional partners in the county.

Program Outcomes

AmeriCorps instructors secured new partnerships and broadened the audience served with STEAM programs. The programs delivered were tailored to specific partner needs.

UI Extension, Twin Falls County has provided Friday programming, consisting of three one-hour rotations, at Hansen Elementary School for three years. This year, with the addition of AmeriCorps instructors, UI Extension, Twin Falls County was not only able to provide current programming on Student Success

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Fridays but also offer one two-hour rotation and one one-hour rotation on Special Interest (SPIN) Fridays. On SPIN Fridays, youth met at least six times during the semester for two hours to focus on a single topic project. The list of projects included We Do 2.0 Robotics, Spice it up Around the World, Acres of Adventure, Dabble in Dissection, Small Animal Education and 4-H Shooting Sports/Hunter Education. Hansen students participating in the 4-H Shooting Sports/Hunter Education SPIN project, completed a 4-H shooting sports project *and* received their Idaho Hunter Education card. These students completed project activities that included hands-on, practical handling of live firearms, an oral presentation, a project record book skills checklist and an involvement report, which were exhibited at the 2020 Twin Falls County Fair. AmeriCorps instructors were also able to broaden the audience served at Hansen Elementary School by providing afterschool programs during the rest of the week to students who do not regularly attend the Friday program. Afterschool activities included lessons in Outdoor Education, Coding w/Drones and Coding w/Ozobots.

AmeriCorps instructors broadened the county's outreach to two additional elementary schools this year, providing enrichment programs with a focus on Robotics/Coding.

AmeriCorps instructors wasted no time during the initial stages of Idaho Rebounds. They worked together to redesign two current programs into a virtual setting and offer them as 4-H Club projects to current 4-H members. Participants joined AmeriCorps instructors each week, for six weeks, to complete Spice it up Around the World. Each week participants learned to recognize a variety of healthful foods, taste new foods from other cultures, explore the similarities of food, and develop an understanding and appreciation of cultures that are different than their own.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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As Idaho moved closer to Stage 2 of Idaho Rebounds, AmeriCorps instructors offered a week-long project, Paper Magic, where members met online for one-hour Monday through Thursday to learn how to turn basic paper shapes into fun animals. On Friday, they met together at the office to share their oral presentations and the displays they created.

Boys & Girls Club Magic Valley (BGC MV) provides ten weeks of summer camp programs serving youth in Twin Falls, Rupert and Buhl. Previously, UI Extension, Twin Falls County has provided at least one program every week at the Twin Falls site. This year, AmeriCorps instructors were able to increase program opportunities in Twin Falls and broaden outreach to include programs in Buhl. New UI Extension, Twin Falls County camps provided this year at BGC MV included Dabble in Dissection, 3...2...1...Action, Paper Magic, Adventure is Out There, Slimy Gooney, Gross, Acres of Adventure and Game Changers.

Additional UI Extension, Twin Falls County summer camps provided by AmeriCorps instructors included Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth w/Science, EV3 Robotics, Advanced EV3 Robotics, WeDo 2.0 Robotics, Acres of Adventure and Dabble in Dissection.

In addition to providing enrichment and out-of-school educational programs, AmeriCorps instructors are required to plan and participate in at least one community service project. This year, AmeriCorps instructors engaged students at Hansen Elementary School in making dog toys for Magic Valley animal shelters.

Despite the challenges brought on by COVID-19, UI Extension, Twin Falls County AmeriCorps instructors provided over 600 direct contact hours with approximately 450 youth in STEAM programs during their term of service.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Twin Falls County Commissioners, Hansen School District and Boys & Girls Club Magic Valley