

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

4-H outreach to geographically dispersed military children, youth and families

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development personnel provide support and life skills to military-connected children, youth and families.

The Situation

Youth involved in 4-H programs develop quality life skills through a positive youth development framework. There are four essential elements in the 4-H program; ensuring that youth feel a sense of belonging in a safe environment, develop independence in both group and individual work, share with others in the community through generosity, and develop a sense of mastery that continues throughout life, practicing and sharing what they have learned.

As military families move frequently and experience the difficulties surrounding deployment and reintegration, 4-H provides predictable programming in a safe and nurturing environment. Outreach to Military Youth (OMY), as part of University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program, provides programming, resources and support. Through residential and weekend camps, the unique needs of military children and their families are met during stressful times of service and deployment.

Our Response

A University of Idaho Extension 4-H program specialist and Extension educator received Idaho Department of Health and Welfare grant funding for the OMY



Gowen Field Day Camp 2021.

program in June 2021. Through partnerships with Idaho National Army and Air Guard Family Services, they implemented five weekend and residential camps for children ages 5-13. Trained 4-H professionals were hired to provide hands-on educational experiences to allow children and youth to connect with their communities and caring adults. During the camps, children and youth develop skills in art, science, cultural engagement, healthy living and leadership.

Program Outcomes

- Four monthly 4-H OMY weekend camps were held at Gowen Field.
- A statewide residential summer camp with Army Child and Youth Services.

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- Conducted 15 trainings with 32 faculty, professional staff and volunteers.
- Reached 205 children and youth, 115 children and 90 youth.
- Developed key partnerships with Airforce and Army Child and Youth Services.
- Implement four educational field trips.

The OMY camps supported student learning, mediated learning loss and provided behavioral health support during the COVID-19 pandemic. During camp students engaged in STEM activities in plant, animal and environmental sciences. They explored different cultures, made art creations and learned how to make healthy choices. Field trips were also provided to give students a sense of belonging and connection to their community. Field trips included the Zoo, Idaho Foot-hills Learning Center, Linder Farms and the Basque Museum. During each field trip, one-two content areas were tied in, such as culture or outdoor science.

During initial meetings with the Idaho National Guard Family Services personnel a possible program barrier was identified; teens often care for their younger siblings on guard duty weekends.

In response, teens were identified to participate in 4-H babysitting training. Following completion of training the teens were recruited to volunteer at the camps. The teens were partnered with adult staff to assist or co-lead activities at the camps. A total of 19 teens

completed the training and have volunteered during the camps.

The 4-H OMY professional staff provided positive support for children and youth at the camps, working with them to develop life skills via hands-on experiential activities. According to the Search Institute there are 40 Developmental Assets, positive supports and strengths, young people need to succeed. Half of the assets focus on external assets such as relationships, stressing that youth need caring, supportive adult mentors. The remaining focus on internal assets, social-emotional strengths, values and commitments nurtured in young people.

The Future

The Outreach to Military Youth program will continue through 2021-2022, with five more weekend camps and a winter residential camp planned. University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development will continue to provide connectivity to educational opportunities for all geographically dispersed military youth and families.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

The 4-H military partnerships are supported by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, National 4-H Headquarters through K-State Research and Extension, Kansas State University under special project number 2016-41520-258.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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