

UI Extension in Fort Hall develops mobile, COVID-19 safe tribal 4-H/youth program

AT A GLANCE

Fort Hall's tribal 4-H Director Nola Cates and UI Extension Educator Danielle Gunn solved tribal 4-H/youth development COVID programming restrictions.

The Situation

The Shoshone-Bannock tribes were hit particularly hard by the Coronavirus in 2020 through the spring of 2022. Our tribe experienced numerous COVID-19 cases which affected the health and productivity of many individuals, families, tribal departments, and businesses. These effects significantly impacted our tribal 4-H program and the community members we serve. Because of the high number of severe cases and the threat to public safety, the Fort Hall Tribal Business Council developed, implemented, and enforced strict tribal COVID-19 regulations. The regulations were designed to protect employees, tribal members, program participants and the community. As part of these regulations, many educational programs, including UI Extension and tribal 4-H/youth development programs could not be conducted, particularly if events were large and participant numbers exceeded ten people. Events were also not allowed if meeting rooms were not large enough to practice social distancing. These restrictions were in place to reduce the significant risk of spreading COVID-19. Some programs were not held for two years unless the appropriate COVID-19 safety precautions could be taken. Working parents and grandparents were significantly impacted when youth programming was temporarily closed.



Tribal youth engage in 4-H and learn how to prepare healthy snacks while programs follow tribal COVID-19 safety protocols.

Although many working parents and grandparents were able to work remotely, many held essential jobs that required in office work. These families had few if any options for providing their youth with wholesome, safe, engaging afterschool activities. There was a strong need for continued youth programming that met tribal safety protocols but kept youth involved and learning healthy life skills.

Our Response

We needed to meet these multiple needs and maintain services for tribal parents, grandparents, and youth. To address the problem, Nola Cates, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribal 4-H director, and Danielle Gunn, UI Extension educator, collaborated with the Fort Hall Early Childhood Afterschool Program, Fort Hall Elementary

School and the 477 Afterschool program. The team of youth experts worked to find solutions to meet COVID-19 regulations but still provide beneficial youth educational programs and assistance. The team of professionals analyzed available meeting room options that were COVID-19 compliant, personal protection equipment supplies, educator availability and topic ideas. As the team worked, several options and ideas were developed. Because the existing UI Extension 4-H/youth development building was too small to social distance youth numbers over 10, 4-H programming was mobilized to tribal facilities that were large enough to be compliant and safe. We were excited to develop a mobile 4-H classroom. The mobile classroom entailed the purchase of a mobile wagon and supplies that were easily packed and prepared for classes outside of our UI Extension office. Portable cooking units were purchased to teach cooking skills. The mobile classroom was a terrific way to reach our regular 4-H'ers. It also gave us the opportunity to expand our outreach to other youth enrolled in afterschool programs that were offered outside of tribal 4-H/youth development programming. Every week, Nola would prepare a lesson plan for three facilities; Fort Hall Afterschool program, Fort Hall Elementary and the 477 Afterschool program, which met tribal COVID regulations. She would then travel to one facility per day and teach an engaging life-skills class to youth. It became a fantastic solution to provide youth education in a safe manner during the pandemic and maintain a high standard of programming from our UI Extension and tribal 4-H/youth development program.

Program Outcomes

Our program outcomes were phenomenal. An average of 40 youth per week, October 2020 through May 2022, were reached. Classes involved teaching youth about nutrition, healthy eating habits, gardening, exercise, tribal culture and crafts. Each class was evaluated by having youth complete a short quiz to aid in memory retention and recording what they learned in

a record book. Program quizzes showed that approximately 95% of youth participants learned one new skill they were comfortable performing at home each week. For example, 95% of youth learned in a healthy foods class that selecting crunchy, nutritious vegetables combined with hummus dip was a far better choice than choosing a cookie. Youth also learned that playing outside and moving their bodies for an hour a day was the healthy choice to make rather than watching television. Youth also learned healthy exercise options.

Youth were very excited to participate in the 2022 tribal afterschool 4-H programming. Our mobile tribal 4-H programming provided a way for youth to have access to important life skills classes and participate in healthy activities during the pandemic.

The Future

Because COVID-19 remains a potential threat to the tribe, we anticipate continuing our mobile tribal 4-H program through the fall of 2022 until May of 2023. At that time, we will reevaluate the program and determine what and if programming needs to change. Our high degree of success with our mobile tribal 4-H program has us excited to teach classes this way permanently, as we can reach more youth traveling to different facilities and programs. We are excited to see what the future holds for our mobile tribal 4-H/youth development program. It was developed in light of a difficult situation but turned into something incredibly positive and beneficial to our community.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Fort Hall Early Childhood Afterschool Program
- Fort Hall Elementary School
- 477 Afterschool Program
- Tribal 4-H/Youth Development Program
- Tribal parents and grandparents
- Federally Recognized Tribes Extension Program

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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12-22-dgunn-tribal-4-H • 8/2