

Master 4-H Volunteer Program training energizes educator efforts

Situation:

Volunteers are essential to the success of the 4-H program. Conversations with adult volunteers and 4-H educators throughout Wyoming determined many volunteer leaders believe they do not have skills necessary to be successful in the leadership roles available to them. The Master 4-H Volunteer program was created to strengthen and enhance the 4-H volunteers' educational background so they are more effective in volunteer roles at the local, area, and state level.

A team of 4-H educators and the Wyoming 4-H Program volunteer development specialist designed and implemented the Master 4-H Volunteer Program. Resources included curriculum and activities developed to provide hands-on experiential learning opportunities. Funding from the Helen Miller Grant, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service Program Enhancement Fund, Wyoming State 4-H Leaders Council, and county in-kind contributions were essential to the success of the program. These partners contributed \$4,845 to create and implement the pilot program.

The first Master 4-H Volunteer training was held in conjunction with the 2009 State Leaders Conference. To qualify, volunteers completed an application and submitted two letters of recommendation. Upon completion of the training, participants agreed to give back 20 hours of service and teach at least one workshop in the coming year for other volunteers. Twenty-seven Wyoming 4-H volunteers applied and were accepted into the 11-hour, intensive program. Each participant completing the program received a tool kit valued at \$100 including curriculum materials and implementation activities for Character Counts to aid in putting into effect what they learned.

Impacts:

Participants completed a survey the end of each day. They were asked to give feedback on open-ended questions and rank each topic covered on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being the most positive and 1 the least positive. The following information was collected:

- "How useful was the information?"

The average score was 4.89. Participants believed the time spent was of good use.

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- Participants were asked to rate knowledge gained in each topic area. The range of scores was 4.11-4.52, indicating an increase in knowledge in each topic area.
- “How do you plan to use the information?”
Fifteen participants reported intentions to use information to improve club meetings. Eight will be helping county councils be more effective.
- Additional comments from participants:
“Awesome. How do we get the Wyoming extension (4-H) working as a partner with the Wyoming Department of Education?”
“I intend to go back to my county and help our agent.”
“Building leaders in youth and other adult volunteers make for a better 4-H group and community.”

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