



Sublette County 4-H YOUTH BUSINESS

SITUATION

Current trends in public education continue to focus on increasing accountability measures, rigor, and high-stakes testing leaving less time during a school day for education focusing on life or “soft” skill development. Youths are getting fewer opportunities to learn trades and skills that are the basis of entrepreneurship in our country. This has created the need for more informal, out-of-school time focusing on soft-skill training such as time and financial management, marketing, and recordkeeping.

In 2008, the Wyoming 4-H program received funding from the Daniels Fund to establish and implement career development and preparation programs throughout the state. Each county had been offered resources and flexibility in career development education efforts and implementation. Sublette County 4-H made the decision to focus on youth entrepreneurship to build soft skills among our youths. Beginning in 2009, the Sublette County 4-H program has organized an annual youth business ventures contest. Additional funding for the annual contests has come from a renewal of the Daniels Fund grant and the ability to utilize unused portions of the state 4-H Daniels Fund grant pool and via monies allocated to the program from the Trover Family Foundation and other local donors.



Robin Schamber
*University Extension Educator
4-H/Youth
Sublette County
(307) 367-4380
rschambe@uwyo.edu*

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VENTURES

invests in 12 youth enterprises over five years

Each year, a contest is advertised throughout Sublette County open to all youths ages 8-18. A committee of local small-business professionals is organized to serve as the awards selection committee. Youths are invited to a pre-contest, educational opportunity on business proposal development and presentation. The selection committee guides youths through not only creating a business proposal but education surrounding marketing strategies, risk management considerations, and mentoring possibilities. Youths with completed business proposals are invited back to present their business ideas to the committee to be considered for funding.

IMPACTS

Twelve small businesses have been funded for a total of \$10,148.42 since inception of the Sublette County 4-H youth business ventures program. Youth business owners range in age from 9-15. Currently, nine of the businesses are still open in Sublette County, and one additional business has since relocated but has continued to operate in Natrona County. Only one of the businesses had less than a two-year survival rate, and two businesses will celebrate five-year anniversaries this spring. One of the youth businesses reported having earned a net income of more than \$8,000 since beginning and a 50-percent business growth

rate the past two years. Another youth assessed their business as highly successful having earned a total net income of \$6,500 and a gross income of nearly \$30,000.

When asked specifically what was learned from being a young business owner, the youths reported:

“Being a business owner is tons of work.”

“Being a business owner has meant that sometimes I have to work holidays and days I don’t want to,” and

“I have learned that you have to work really hard to build your business, and sometimes it just doesn’t happen very fast.”

The 4-H youth venture contest and education provided to increase skills for Sublette County youths is truly a success. The impact is documented by the sustainability of the businesses started by the seed money provided through the contest.

