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Expanding International Opportunities in Agriculture Education and Youth Development Global Perspectives Summary Report



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Summary

This project supported Warren Crawford and James Dawson, University of Wyoming 4-H staff members to conduct site visits to learn and explore ideas to grow and expand opportunities in agriculture education and youth development in Finland. Additionally, Niina Haatainen, Executive Director of the Vieremä 4-H Association, was scheduled to travel to Wyoming to visit and learn first hand about the agriculture focused projects and program offered by Wyoming 4-H. Unfortunately, the trip was canceled due to the travel restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key component of the exchange was to work toward building relationships to expand 4-H opportunities for young people to learn and develop as well as professional development and opportunities in both countries.

Below are a few highlights of the professional exchange that was able to occur.

- Explored components of the Finnish 4-H program that could be strengthened or restructured to promote agriculture engagement and knowledge.
- Learn about the culture and way of life in Finland as well as share the US culture and explore global agricultural issues.



Crawford and Dawson with Finnish hosts overlooking the Finnish countryside

Crawford leveraged this Global Perspectives award with funding from the Wyoming State 4-H Foundation to administer a cross cultural exchange that included 3 professional staff and 11 student participants.

Expanding International Opportunities in Agriculture

Exploring opportunities in 4-H to support Agriculture Education



American and Finnish students participate in the traditional hay stacking method to dry hay.

The Finnish 4-H Federation primarily supports youth education and youth development through 3 main program areas:

- Youth Entrepreneurship
- Environmental Stewardship
- citizenship/Leadership

These three program areas have supported 4-H programming in Finland for many, many years. However, some of the more rural areas are looking to expand opportunities and target education and support in developing future agriculturists.

Vieremä Finland, located in the Northern Savonia region, lies in the heart of the largest agriculture production region of Finland. The Vieremä 4-H Association is looking to provide additional learning opportunities focused specifically on

linking young people to the many agriculture industries in their community.

After discussions with Vieremä 4-H staff and the board of directors that lead the association, it was apparent the rules and regulations set by Finnish national and European Union (EU) policies, young people's direct involvement in agriculture production is prohibitive at the organization level. The resulting outcome was the movement toward teaching young people the vast history and traditional agriculture practices and focusing on ag tourism as a way to engage and educate young people in current agriculture practices.

A couple examples of this was the establishment of an animal showcase at a local outdoor living history museum where visitors

could view and learn about different livestock species such as dairy goats, wool sheep, meat rabbits, driving ponies, and laying and market duck. 4-H members cared for the animals and lead educational tours for visitors. In addition, the 4-H members set up educational booths and games at local horse race track. The goal was to teach young people about the local agriculture industries and explore career opportunities in the many agriculture fields.



The finished product - traditional Finnish hay stacks dot the hay field.



Participants visit Finnish dairy farm and explore the Dairy Research Field Days.

Exploring the 4-H Program in Wyoming

Niina Haatainen, Executive Director of the Vieremä 4-H Association, was scheduled to visit the University of Wyoming 4-H Program in April 2020. Travel plans were secured and site visits were scheduled before the COVID-19 pandemic thwarted all travel plans. Our shared goal for the time Niina was in Wyoming was to expose her to a variety of the more traditional

based agriculture 4-H projects and learning opportunities offered in the Wyoming 4-H program.

The one silver lining in the University of Wyoming response to COVID-19 was the transition to virtual learning. The Wyoming 4-H program followed suite by expanding virtual learning opportunities that we were able to share with Niina a few of the team leaders



Visit and tour of Finland's largest forest machine manufacture, Ponsse. Forest products are one of Finland's largest and most important agriculture industry.



American and Finnish students visit horse stables and learn about the Finnish horse industry.

and youth members of the Vieremä 4-H Association.

Expanding International Opportunities in Agriculture



A water tour on Vieremä's famous sauna boat. Combining Finland's vast lakes and river ways with a favorite cultural activity—Sauna!



Sampling traditional Finnish fried fish, Muikku, in Helsinki's Market Square

Cultural Experiences and International Learning

While in Finland, American visitors had the opportunity to learn about the rich Finnish history and culture. This provided an opportunity to explore cultural experiences such as traditional Finnish foods, Nordic architecture, Finnish saunas, and the traditional Finnish way of life.



Making traditional Finnish rice cakes—Piirakat (Karelian pie)



Participants took in the very popular Friday night horse races.



Zoom meeting with Niina and Vieremä 4-H members connecting virtually.

Future Opportunities

It was clear when talking to farmers, ranchers, foresters, and agriculture researchers in Finland, we share similar challenges and opportunities as the U.S. agriculture industry. The aging population and lack of youth interest in pursuing careers in agriculture is causing concern for the future of the industry. As the Vieremä 4-H association moves to connect local agriculture leaders with 4-H youth programs, the opportunities for both the 4-H program and the local ag industry

can and will grow together. The Wyoming 4-H program can play a role in this growth by sharing resources and learn from one another via the internet is unlimited. Our post COVID-19 environment took the Wyoming 4-H program virtual which also allowed us to focus our attention and continued partnership virtually. The identification of sister 4-H clubs between the Vieremä 4-H Association and Wyoming 4-H will be pursued and a schedule developed to share 4-H project work through web based technology.

This project is one more step in developing long term international cooperation between the University of Wyoming 4-H Program and Vieremä 4-H to help students explore career opportunities and reach their full potential in our global society.

It is our hope that continued financial support can be obtained to provide future travel opportunities to continue the partnership to strengthen both the Wyoming and Finland 4-H programs.

Special Thanks

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