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## Conducting 4-H Spring Break Activities to Meet Community Needs

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## Conducting 4-H Spring Break Activities to Meet Community Needs

### Abstract

A University of Idaho study showed how important it is for kids to feel accepted and safe during out-of-school hour activities. A program called "Jump Into Spring" began to provide something fun and educational for kids to do during spring break. Classes offered were 2 hours long, and the materials used were from approved 4-H curriculum. This activity has expanded to include more classes and reach a larger audience each year. Non-4-H members are attending at an increasing rate, exposing more youth to 4-H. Families attending appreciate something constructive and educational for youth to do during spring break.

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## Situation

A University of Idaho study of Idaho youth (Goodwin et al., 2005) showed how important it is for kids to feel accepted and safe during out-of-school hour activities. Seven out of 10 4-H youth reported that 4-H is a "safe place for learning" and "4-H clubs are supportive environments where I feel accepted for who I am." With this in mind, Minidoka County 4-H staff saw the need to provide 4-H curriculum-based workshops during the weeklong school spring break. Area youth are traditionally out of school the third week in March, and in most cases adults in the family are employed and are not able to stay home. This leaves youth home alone or in other less desirable environments.

The Minidoka County 4-H Promotion and Expansion Committee recognized the need for youth activities during long breaks from school and supported the decision to provide workshops for these youth. Area schools appreciate the value of hands-on learning and the development of life skills and helped in distributing information about the activities.

## Response

A program called "Jump Into Spring" began in Minidoka County in 2002 to provide something fun and educational for kids to do during spring break. Classes offered were 2 hours long, and the materials used were from approved 4-H curriculum. This activity was a good opportunity to work on a 4-H project, but youth did not need to be in 4-H to participate. The fee charged for the classes was \$5.00 per person, which allowed the youth to attend one class or all six.

Classes offered included scrapbooking, leather craft, family folklore, frozen bread dough, financial management, and ethics and etiquette. A 1-day workshop to help youth and adults explore the reality of working partnerships was also included. This workshop was presented by the University of Idaho in partnership with the Rupert Kiwanis, the City of Rupert, Minidoka County, Mini-Cassia Health Net, the Minidoka County School District, and Minidoka County 4-H. The goal of this partnership workshop was to help the participants understand the need to work together in making decisions about programs and to develop strategies to work together in the community.

## Program Growth

Jump Into Spring has expanded to include more classes and reach a larger audience each year. Partnerships were also formed with area businesses, the local library, city police, 4-H volunteers, 4-H teens, and other county 4-H programs in District III. In 2004, many of the classes were taught by area business owners or 4-H volunteers from nearby counties. This enabled the information to spread across county lines, and in 2005 most of the county 4-H programs within the Extension District offered workshops for youth during spring break.

Participation continues to grow, and fees were increased to \$7.00 in 2005 for one or all classes offered. Classes included: Smart Cookies, Furry Scarves, Rocketry, Cowboy Poetry, Pillow Making, Shooting Sports, Dutch Oven, and Wildlife. Art, Palette of Fun (a project in a day) was also offered for an additional \$5.00. In 1 day, this project was completed, demonstration given, record book finished, and ribbons awarded. These projects were also displayed at the Minidoka County Fair held in August.

## Outcomes

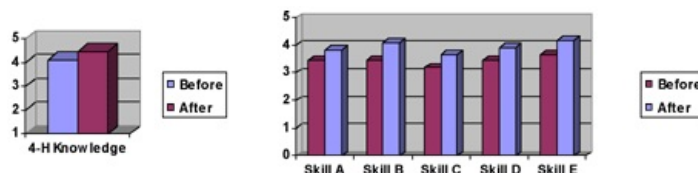
The attendance for classes offered during Jump Into Spring activities increased from 151 (six classes) in 2002 to 457 (nine classes) in 2005. The majority of youth attending participate in four or more of the classes. In 2005, 41% of the youth attending were not 4-H members, an increase from 19% in 2003, enabling more youth to be exposed to the positive influence of 4-H. Ages invited increased from nine and older in 2002 to including "clover buds" in 2005, some as young as 5 years old.

Suggestions for topics are no longer decided by the 4-H staff but recommended by volunteer adults and 4-H teens who commit to plan and teach the sessions. In order for families to continue to participate, registration fees have been held to a minimum with donated items and support from community volunteers.

## Program Evaluations

Families who participated in 2005 were surveyed before and after the program to determine their level of knowledge about 4-H and change in the following life skills; (A) communication, (B) problem solving, (C) planning/organizing, (D) teamwork, and (E) personal safety. On a scale of 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest), knowledge about 4-H increased from 4 to 4.5. All showed an increase in the knowledge of life skills (average of 3.4 to 3.9), with the largest increases in problem solving, planning/organizing, and teamwork.

**Figure 1.**  
Knowledge and Skills Gained from Jump Into Spring



Families were also asked to evaluate the level of enjoyment and knowledge learned during the classes. On the same 1 to 5 scale, classes averaged 4.4 in the level of enjoyment and 4.6 in knowledge learned. The Dutch Oven class and Art, Palette of Fun were reported to be the most enjoyable (each rated 4.8) and also had the highest level of knowledge gained (5). Proving learning through 4-H can really be fun!

## Impact on Families

The survey also asked families how Jump Into Spring affected their activities during spring break. Comments included:

- It was a great way to spend my spring break vacation.
- My kids were glad to have something fun and social to do; it's nice to be able to pick classes.
- These are the only plans we make during spring break now.
- Loved the idea, it gets more kids into 4-H.
- The girls enjoyed every class they went to, they can't wait to show off at fair.
- Kids had a great time and can't wait until next year, thanks so much.
- This week is great, my girls enjoyed being here so they don't have to stay home, keeps them from being bored.

- Kids had something to do, learn a lot and had fun.
- It let my kids do something constructive and educational during spring break, they loved the hands on projects.

Participants were asked how they found out about Jump Into Spring activities, 29% indicated the 4-H Leader Newsletter, 19% direct mail, 14% from another person, 14% radio interviews, 14% school handouts and 10% from local newspaper articles.

## Conclusion

Jump Into Spring is a growing and successful program because it meets the needs of area families during spring break from school. Youth and adults agree that classes are educational and fun. Volunteers, including those from surrounding counties, continue to offer to help and teach a wide variety of workshops. Non-4-H members are attending at an increasing rate, enabling more youth to be exposed to the positive influence of 4-H. The Minidoka County 4-H Program will continue to organize spring break activities for area families including more 4-H projects in a day.

## References

Goodwin, J., Barnett, C., Pike, M., Peutz, J. , Lanting, R., & Ward, A., (2005). Idaho 4-H impact study. *Journal of Extension* [On-line], 43(4) Article 4FEA4. Available at:  
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