

4-H offers a digital media program to youth in Kootenai County

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension's 4-H youth are learning how to create and share digital content responsibly to gain an understanding of online safety, privacy and respectful communication.

The Situation

As digital platforms continue to shape communication, education and social interaction, youth are increasingly seeking visibility and engagement online.

With more teens wanting an online and social media presence, it is essential that we teach them how to navigate these platforms safely and appropriately.

In addition, the rapid growth of artificial intelligence (AI) introduces another important layer of digital learning. Youth must understand how to use AI as a tool for creativity, problem-solving and communication while also learning about its limitations and ethical use.

Our Response

The digital media team was created to empower teens with hands-on experience in modern communication and technology. Youth ages 13 and older enrolled in 4-H were invited to join this team. Participating in this University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program, youth take on real-world roles in livestreaming, graphic design and social media management while building valuable leadership and career-ready skills.



Youth participating in a livestream event. Photo by Teresa Balderrama.

Through our digital media team, youth are learning how to use technology to create videos that tell stories, share information and showcase their creativity. They gain hands-on experience with cameras, editing software and teamwork, all while building confidence and communication skills.

Program Outcomes

Since launching the 4-H digital media program in Kootenai County, our youth have made significant progress in developing a strong online presence and expanding their communication skills. Through hands-on experience and teamwork, participants have applied their learning to real-world platforms, helping to share the 4-H story with a wider audience.

- **YouTube channel:** Youth created and managed a YouTube channel featuring event highlights, educational videos, livestreamed events and community stories. They handle all aspects of production from filming and editing to uploading and tagging content.
- **Facebook presence:** The team established and maintains an active presence on Facebook, posting updates, event promotions and behind-the-scenes content that showcases the 4-H program.
- **Podcast:** Members took part in a youth-led podcast, gaining experience in planning, interviewing, recording and sharing digital audio content. This opportunity allowed them to use their voices to inform and inspire others while learning professional communication skills.

Participation in the 4-H digital media program has also helped youth develop strong public speaking and communication skills. Youth reports increased confidence in public speaking. Opportunities to speak on camera, lead digital presentations and interact with audiences have helped participants build communication skills that extend beyond the program setting.

The team's digital media content received 7,692 total views over the past year across all platforms.

The program's social media channels now have 411 subscribers, reflecting steady audience growth and community interest in youth-led content.

These outcomes demonstrate how the 4-H digital media program not only builds technical and creative skills but also empowers youth to share their voices and connect with a wider audience. Through consistent effort, the team has built an online presence that highlights the positive work and leadership of 4-H members in the community.

Our following continues to grow, allowing the 4-H story to be shared with more people across our community and beyond. Through consistent effort and creative content, the Digital Media Team is amplifying youth voices and showcasing the impact of 4-H programs. Each video, post and livestream helps highlight the leadership, learning and positive experiences that 4-H provides.

As our online presence expands, youth gain valuable life skills while inspiring others to get involved in the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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