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4-H youth turn leadership training into food insecurity outreach

AT A GLANCE

Youth in the University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development program in Madison County, used a nationwide leadership opportunity to address food insecurity in their local community.

The Situation

Participants in the nationwide 4-H Leadership Academy, also known as Roth Scholars, must complete a capstone project. 4-H youth Adriana and Mykalana Hansen met this challenge by working with their mentors to identify a meaningful community project. To get the project approved, participants had to show they could use and apply the leadership, communication and service skills they learned during monthly meetings with other members of the 4-H Leadership Academy nationwide. Their initial ideas included creating activities that encourage community interaction to promote and normalize conversations surrounding mental health.

With assistance from their mentors, Adriana and Mykalana connected with the Family Crisis Center in Rexburg and learned about a need within its food box program. Staff and volunteers explained that several families were leaving nutritious foods, including squash, zucchini and other items behind because they were unfamiliar with them or lacked the knowledge to prepare a meal with them. Recognizing an opportunity to serve, the youth shifted their project to address this need with an emphasis on food insecurity.



Roth Scholars Adriana and Mykalana Hansen, with Sammy Lee, who received an Instant Pot. Photo by Kimberly Hansen.

Our Response

Mykalana and Adriana worked with the Family Crisis Center in Rexburg to address needs identified within its food box program. Applying the skills gained through the 4-H Leadership Academy, they developed a plan to film cooking videos featuring items commonly found in food boxes distributed at the Family Crisis Center. They focused on using items that people may not be familiar with and incorporated them into recipes that they tested at home. With the help of Extension educators Lance Hansen and Deanna Paulsen, they acted in, filmed and produced eight YouTube videos featuring the recipes they tested.

Adriana and Mykalana created a flyer with an easy-to-access QR code link to the demonstration videos and

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an evaluation. They volunteered at the Family Crisis Center, promoted the project and interacted directly with individuals and families who received food boxes. As part of the project, they developed an evaluation with help from 4-H Extension specialist Matt Fisher. The evaluation measured changes in participants' knowledge, confidence and willingness to prepare the foods featured in the videos. As members of the National 4-H Leadership Academy, they received funds to purchase Instant Pots as raffle prizes to encourage participants to watch the videos and complete the evaluation.

Program Outcomes

The 4-H Leadership Academy produced outcomes at two levels: leadership development for the Roth Scholars and measurable benefits for the individuals and families served through their community project.

Youth leadership outcomes — Through the 4-H Leadership Academy, Mykalana and Adriana gained valuable leadership experience by learning to identify community needs, develop an effective response, manage projects and effectively evaluate a program. They strengthened their leadership skills, gained new insight into communicating through YouTube, learned the importance of professionalism, networked with other youth nationwide, learned more about video production and editing, and learned how to conduct evaluations and data analysis. The experience also increased their confidence in working with community partners, presenting information and interacting with people they did not know.

The Roth Scholars traveled to Georgia to meet peers from across the nation and connect with other youth leaders. As members of UI Extension's 4-H Leadership Academy cohort, they successfully completed their project and were both awarded a $4,000 college scholarship. They also used this project as their senior year capstone and continued volunteering and providing education at the Family Crisis Center.

Community project outcomes — Over three months, 36 individuals who received food boxes from the Family Crisis Center completed the evaluation. Each demonstration video was viewed an average of 30 to 40 times. Results show that the cooking videos developed by these 4-H youth provided useful information, and participants reported increased confidence preparing foods using items commonly found in the food boxes.

- 97% reported the videos were helpful and provided ideas for preparing foods received in their food boxes.
- 86% felt confident trying a recipe or using ideas demonstrated in the videos.
- 94% reported increased confidence cooking with foods found in their food boxes.
- 97% reported that the information presented in the videos was easy to understand.
- 10 instant pots were provided to food-box recipients as incentives for participating in the evaluation and as resources for preparing meals at home.

Together, these outcomes show the dual impact on the youth who participated in the 4-H Leadership Academy and how their project filled a need in their community.

The Future

UI Extension 4-H Youth Development has selected the second group of Roth Scholars to continue in the 4-H Leadership Academy.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Special thanks to the National 4-H Council, the Family Crisis Center in Rexburg and the late Joel Roth, whose generous donation made the National 4-H Leadership Academy possible.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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