

A Boost for Youth

4-H Participation Generally Goes Up When Counties Join Districts

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Kansas extension agents say the state’s move to pool resources from local offices is paying off in “new and exciting ways” for 4-H, the state’s largest youth development program.

“Current districts have been able to enhance the project work that’s going on,” said Diane Mack, a 4-H specialist in the northeast area extension office. “A volunteer with project expertise in one county can share their knowledge with youth all across the district.”

Robyn Deines, an agent in the Walnut Creek District, notes examples where 4-H ambassadors – one from each of the three counties in her district – worked together to offer day camps.

In the River Valley District, director John Forshee notes that a district-wide 4-H Day is now being shared by four counties, each hosting the event every four years.

In the Central Kansas District, agent Sarah Maas notes that a district team worked together to earn grants that helped the district host days camps on leadership and citizenship, science; and environment.

And, several district agents and directors noted time and money savings by counties cooperating on training sessions, volunteer signup, after-school programs, water festivals, pre-fair activities, travel, and more.



4-H specialist Diane Mack says extension districts help to provide youth with more opportunities to succeed.

In 2010, there were nearly 63,000 kids who participated in Kansas 4-H. There were 946 community clubs.

“We know that 4-H produces great leaders. One of the things that happens within a district is that there are more leadership opportunities. The kids are able to work together as a team and develop new leadership skills,” Mack said. “[There are] successes, and maybe perhaps a failure or two, [but] they can come together, learn from those mistakes and build those leadership skills.”

Tara Solomon, an agent in the Southwind District, notes that because district 4-H programs tend to draw more participants, volunteers feel like their time is better spent.

“We have had volunteers really step up and branch out [in an area] that they love and [plan] a multi-county project meeting,” Solomon said. “[4-H] is completely volunteer-led and, you know, one agent can’t do everything that our volunteers are able to do.”

Statistics from the Kansas 4-H office indicate

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Continued from page 1



Agent Tara Solomon, who is based in Neosho County, says 4-H participation has increased since joining the Southwind Extension District.

Extension summarizing their comments, the directors noted that local residents initially feared losing their local 4-H programs, but that fear has never been realized.

“We need to remember that the 4-H program and extension has continually evolved over many years,” Mack said. “It doesn’t look the same today as it was 20 years ago. 4-H has evolved and will continue to evolve with each new generation of 4-H

that there were 6,031 adult, and 21,581 youth volunteers in 2010.

In November 2011, directors of Kansas extension districts met to discuss benefits of district programs. In a report from K-State Research and

members and volunteers.

“Each county [has its] traditions, but when counties come together to form a district, it can be even better. 4-H’s motto is to make the best better; 4-H in a district can make the best better.”