

Youth Development 4-H Ag Innovators Experience

Situation

A team of 4-H teen leaders in the Cottonwood Extension District helped drive youth awareness of, and interest in, agriculture innovation and careers through the annual national Ag Innovators Experience. Kansas agriculture accounts for 45% of the state's local economy and employs 13% of the state's workforce.

What We Did

The 4-H Ag Innovators Experience (AIE), a collaboration with National 4-H Council and Monsanto, challenged young people to apply critical thinking and STEM skills to a real-world agriculture challenge. Three teens attended an intensive national training on this year's challenge *Monarchs on the Move* activity at Iowa State University. Using the train the trainer model, these three teens then trained the 19 members of the AIE leadership team. These teens taught the challenge activity that helped 1,058 youth learn about the monarch butterfly, a flagship species representing many pollinators that contribute to our food supply and the health of our planet. Specifically, they helped youth understand the challenges affecting the monarch butterfly's survival rates and learned how everyone can contribute to increasing the monarch habitat to support sustainable monarch populations.

Outcomes

After serving on the leadership team and teaching 1,058 youth using the *Monarchs on the Move Challenge*: (11 teens responded)

- 82% answered yes, "At 4-H, did you learn new things about science."
- 91% answered yes or usually, "When you learn about a problem in the community, do you look for ways to help."
- 90% answered yes or usually, "Do you feel a responsibility to help your community?"
- 82% answered a lot, "How much has 4-H inspired you to volunteer in your community?"
- 100% answered yes or sort of, "At 4-H, did you talk about how science can be used to help solve everyday problems?"
- 82% answered yes or sort of, "Would you like a job that uses science."

After completing the Monarchs on the Move Challenge: (1,058 youth participants surveyed)

- 79% answered yes, "I understand why creating and protecting pollinator habitats is important"
- 79% answered yes, "I think it was important to work in a group to complete the challenge."
- 70% answered yes, "My teammates and I used good communication to complete the challenge."
- 64% answered yes, "I have a better understanding of how science and engineering help solve real life problems."
- 52% answered yes, "I am more interested in science and agriculture."

Additional Outcomes:

- 22 teens, 7th through 9th graders, developed presentation and organizational skills and confidence in their abilities to "lead and teach". In most settings, the teens worked together to provide the educational activities. They learned to work in teams to present information. They learned to be

flexible as they approached each new setting or audience. They built friendships and partnerships as they made their nearly 50 community presentations.

- The diverse team of teens from across the district each brought something positive to the team. The three Latino teens helped reach their community at the Cinco de Mayo event. Each teen on the team had different connections in the community that opened other doors to new audiences.

Success Story

“My favorite part of the Monarchs on the Move Challenge program was the training at Iowa State University. I met people from all over the country and now I have friends in many different states. This project has also influenced what I want to do later in life. My main section of the program was the drones and because of that, I have changed what I want to major in college. I want to be more involved with drones as a full-time career. I have decided to go to Kansas State University Polytechnic and major in Unmanned Aerial Systems.” Brett, 18.

“The AIE project expanded my knowledge of agriculture and made me more interested. My leadership skills are very strong because of 4-H. It has helped me to push myself to always do my best on projects and challenges. Passing on my skills while teaching others is one thing I love about 4-H. Teaching youth that they too can make a difference is very rewarding.” Lexi, 16

Contact

Susan Schlichting, sschlich@ksu.edu or Berny Unruh, bunruh@ksu.edu

4-H Youth Development Extension Agents, Cottonwood Extension District

