

4-H The Power of YOUTH

4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship, and life skills.

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MetLife Foundation Boosts Civic Engagement via 4-H Afterschool Programs

MetLife Foundation's 4-H Afterschool Training Grants provide a minimum of eight hours of training to 5,500 after-school providers.

With that kind of training, providers can raise the quality of after-school programs, look for better ways to infuse civic engagement into after-school programs, and increase the number of youth engaged in high-quality after-school programs.

States receiving 2009 MetLife Foundation 4-H Afterschool Training Grants include:

- California
- Florida
- Kentucky
- Maryland/ Delaware
- Mississippi
- New Jersey
- Nevada
- Texas
- Washington
- West Virginia
- Wisconsin

MetLife Foundation



Miss America and Miss Black Kentucky Credit 4-H with Passion for Service



Katie Stam, Miss America 2009 and 4-H Alumna (left), chose Promoting Community Service and Involvement as her national pageant platform.

Tamira Cole, Miss Black Kentucky and 4-H Alumna (right), uses her Youth in Action pageant platform to mentor young people in Ghana.

Ask Katie Stam or Tamira Cole about their passion for community service, and they'll tell you it all started with 4-H.

Long before winning her title as Miss America, Katie Stam spent many hours in 4-H performing in creative dramatics, competing at the Jackson County fair, and visiting with 4-H friends and family. It was there that she learned the values of leadership, mentorship, and community service. And like most 4-H kids, she collected blue ribbons and trophies along the way to mark her accomplishments.

For Tamira Cole, Miss Black Kentucky, 4-H proved just as powerful. After winning first place in a 4-H public speaking competition, she felt motivated to take on even more challenges. That propelled her into leadership and citizenship projects—shaping her passion for service.

"4-H brought me out of my shell," said Tamira, during a recent interview. "I learned the value of compassion and community service, and I learned how important it is for young people to speak up for youth and community issues."

Now that they're in the spotlight, both Katie and Tamira are getting the message out that community service is important and rewarding. Katie's platform, Promoting Community Service and Involvement, aims to get youth involved in their own neighborhoods. Her first goal? Partnering with President Obama to expand service learning in schools nationwide.

Tamira is already promoting her platform, Youth in Action, by reaching out to young people in Ghana. Each week, Tamira and other youth volunteers hold live Web chats with young Ghanaians and help them develop action plans for local, issue-based projects.

Together, Katie and Tamira could potentially transform the way millions of young people think about community service and 4-H. "4-H is such an advocate for community service," said Katie. "It encourages you to reach out to people in so many different ways." ■

4-H Members Raise Awareness of Meningitis

In Louisiana, 4-H youth took their civic engagement skills and put them towards something life-changing—advocating and lobbying for meningitis prevention.

After two families in Vermillion Parish lost their children to meningitis—an infection that strikes nearly 3,000 Americans each year and carries a 10 to 12 percent death rate—4-H members took action. The Vermillion Parish 4-H Junior Leader Club started their own Meningitis Awareness Campaign and invited local health officials, as well as the mother of a meningitis victim, to speak at their monthly meetings. They even designed an educational exhibit for parish-wide health fairs and handed out brochures and posters to middle and high-school students, encouraging them to get vaccinated.

"I think the original motivation for this project was very personal," said Shannan Waits, a 4-H Extension Agent in Vermilion Parish. "4-H members knew the two students who died from meningitis, so it was real to them. They knew the disease was taking lives, even though it could be prevented via



Members of the Vermillion Parish 4-H Club gather at a community health fair to raise awareness for their Meningitis Campaign.

a safe, FDA-approved vaccine. That really hit home and motivated them to take action."

Perhaps the most important step the Campaign members made was to collaborate with the Meningitis Angel's Association, a publicly-supported organization dedicated to those who lost their lives to meningitis. Working together, they designed and sold enough Meningitis Awareness bracelets to fund the Meningitis Angel's Association's lobbying efforts. Their hard work paid off, because Congress suc-

cessfully passed a bill that requires sixth-graders to show proof of their meningitis vaccination. And according to a 4-H survey, approximately 92 percent of the Campaign members were fired up by the project and wanted to work on even more service learning activities.

"I sensed that through this project they were taking what happened and turning it into a positive thing," said Waits. "[4-H] created awareness so that other people wouldn't have to go through the same thing." ■

4-H Food Drive Benefits Massachusetts



Northborough 4-H members in Worcester County, MA, pause for a quick picture while collecting food for "4-H Cares about Community."

For the second year in a row, Massachusetts 4-H members have played a significant role in helping to end hunger in their communities. From Barnstable County to Worcester County and beyond, several 4-H clubs took part in "4-H Cares about Community," a food drive to benefit homeless shelters and food pantries across the state. When all was said and done, they had successfully collected a grand total of 17,532 pounds of food, exceeding their previous year's amount by 50 percent.

Cumberland Farms, the official sponsor of 4-H's food drive efforts, did more than just provide financial support. They also contributed to the project by placing food collection boxes in

more than 190 of their stores throughout the state.

Motivated by the success of the food drive, Cumberland Farms also offered 13 Youth in Action grants to 4-H clubs in Massachusetts as well as in 10

other states with high-impact community service projects. Some noteworthy projects included renovating a therapeutic riding center, making weighted vests for special-needs children, and sewing fleece pillows for hospice patients. These unique mini-grant projects, along with the food drive project, not only gave Massachusetts 4-H members a sense of civic pride, but they also gave youth an opportunity to dive head-first into hands-on learning and leadership activities. ■



4-H Scholarships Fund Trip of a Lifetime

National 4-H Council and National 4-H Headquarters are giving scholarships to youth from the 1890 historically black Land-Grant Universities and the 1994 Native American tribal colleges, allowing them to attend National 4-H Conference—the Secretary of Agriculture's premier youth development event. Through a combined contribution of \$125,000 from the Farm Credit Systems Foundation, Inc. and ACH Foods/Fleischmann's Yeast, 60 youth and adults from underrepresented communities will have the chance to travel to Washington, D.C., and attend this year's Conference from March 28 to April 2, 2009.

During each conference, youth from across the country will engage with leaders from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, meet with their congressional representatives, and learn first-hand about how our government works. The scholarships not only allow participants to experience National 4-H Conference, but they also shape their futures as active citizens and leaders. ■



Citizenship Program Inspires Youth to Serve

As a young immigrant from East Africa, Hussein Abjullahi joined the Franklin, MN, 4-H Club in hopes of finding a safe place to talk about problems he saw in his community: school bullying, discrimination, and gang violence.

Teaming up with other 4-H members, Hussein created an action plan, hosted focus groups, and organized community presentations—all with the goal of increasing community awareness. Thanks to a New York Life Foundation scholarship, he even got the opportunity to share his ideas at Citizenship Washington Focus (CWF), a six-day intensive program in Washington, D.C.

While in D.C., Hussein gave a presentation to Congressman Keith Ellison on the impact of gang violence in his community and demonstrated how 4-H provides a nurturing alternative for youth. The experience not only strengthened his

understanding of the government's civic process, but it also boosted his leadership skills, communication skills, and overall confidence. The best part of the story? Hussein returned home after CWF and decided to become a tutor and mentor for other youth in his community, many of whom were also East African immigrants.

Success stories like Hussein's are possible thanks to National 4-H Council's collaboration with New York Life Foundation. By the year 2010, 4-H aims to develop 90 additional New York Life Youth in Governance 4-H Clubs in New York City, Cleveland, and Minneapolis. 4-H will also fund 270 CWF scholarships to attract more young people to citizenship programs and expose them to the positive youth development opportunities that 4-H offers. ■



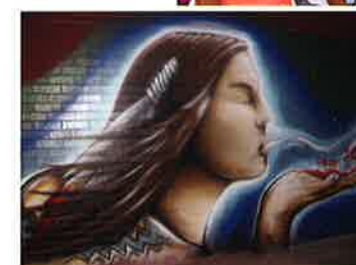
Nebraska Communities Show 4-H P.R.I.D.E.

When a Gering-Scottsbluff, NE, 4-H group known as P.R.I.D.E. (People Restoring Involvement, Dignity, and Excellence) hosted a public forum to see how they could give back to the community, the response was overwhelmingly in favor of neighborhood rejuvenation projects. Several rounds of lively debate later, they also agreed that Southeast Scottsbluff's graffiti-covered buildings and trash-filled alleys should take first priority.

Teaming up with the mayor, the police chief, and local business owners, P.R.I.D.E. members tackled everything from collecting trash in local parks to planting trees. As for the unsightly graffiti that covered many of the neighborhood's buildings, a special committee did much more than just wash away the offensive markings. They also painted several colorful murals to discourage vandals altogether.

To ensure that each beautification project stays that way for years to come, P.R.I.D.E. also implemented an incentive program for local businesses and residences. Those who maintain their areas not only get an outdoor plaque, they also get a feature story in the newspaper.

The Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)-funded project has been so successful that it recently received two prestigious awards—the 2008 MeLife Excellence in Citizenship Award and the 2008 USDA 4-H Program of Distinction*. But ask any P.R.I.D.E. member what the real rewards are, and he or she will probably tell you it comes in the form of positive feedback like this from a community parent: "I was aware of the potential my daughter had, but her involvement with 4-H P.R.I.D.E. has given her the opportunity to live up to that potential. She has become more confident and self-assured." ■



4-H P.R.I.D.E. members assisted local artist Rigoberto Garcia to paint colorful murals he designed across town to discourage vandals.

Internet Safety Top Priority for 4-H Members

As part of an innovative 4-H *Engaging Youth, Serving Community (EYSC)* program* in Delaware, 4-H youth in rural Felton have started their own Internet safety program to protect young people from Internet predators.

After identifying several high-risk areas like social networking sites, instant message/chat rooms, and dating sites, 4-H members drafted their action plan for keeping youth safe in those areas. As part of their plan, they organized an Internet Safety Night where representatives from the

state police, the school library, and a variety of technology businesses offered tips on avoiding cyber predators and scams.

Thanks to the EYSC program, these Delaware teens have recognized the power of effective citizenship and the positive roles they can play in their own communities. According to Delaware 4-H Program Coordinator Karen Johnston, the youth-led program has proved



Delaware 4-H members started their own Internet safety program to offer young people tips on avoiding cyber predators and scams.

an empowering experience for everyone: "It's not enough to talk about a problem. We help young people develop their leadership and critical skills so that they can build creative solutions to community issues. And we give them the tools...so that they can immediately implement their solutions." ■



*This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2005-45201-03332. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Produced by National 4-H Council Marketing & Communications Team
03/09-3.7k-mkt27



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