



# 4-H National Mentoring Program

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## 4-H Council Launches National Mentoring Program

National 4-H Council is proud to announce the kick-off a nationwide mentoring initiative. The 4-H National Mentoring Program will provide funding to land-grant universities in 47 states for replicating three evidence-based Extension 4-H programs serving at-risk and high risk populations, with the goals of increasing youth social competency, family relationships, and academic success. This project is supported by a \$5 million award from the Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as part of OJJDP's national effort to strengthen, expand, and implement youth mentoring activities to improve the lives of millions of young Americans.

Representatives from all selected program sites participated in a training at the National 4-H Youth Conference Center in Chevy Chase, MD, near Washington, DC, on January 10-15, 2011. State 4-H programs selected from three of Cooperative Extension's proven mentoring programs to establish in their local communities: *4-H Mentoring: Youth & Families with Promise (YFP)*, developed by Utah State University; *4-H Tech Wizards*, developed by Oregon State University; and *4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE)*, developed by the University of Missouri.

It has been demonstrated that a trusting relationship with a caring adult can have a life-changing effect on a young person. Sites will implement, monitor, and assess program mentoring strategies to create positive outcomes for youth. Research data indicates that mentoring programs have reduced first-time drug use by almost 50% and first-time alcohol use by 33%. In addition, mentored youth display greater confidence in their schoolwork and improve their academic performance.

## 4-H Invited by First Lady to the National Mentoring Summit



First Lady Michelle Obama invited 4-H to showcase its successful mentoring programs at the first ever National Mentoring Summit in Washington, DC, on January 25, 2011 which was hosted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), MENTOR, and Harvard School of Public Health. High school senior 4-H'er Jose Cazares and his mentor and *4-H Tech Wizards* program director Octaviano Merecias-Cuevas from Portland, Oregon attended the Summit as representatives of 4-H mentoring programs across the country. Cazares joined *4-H Tech Wizards* as a high school freshman, inspired by other *4-H Tech Wizards* who had increased their GPAs and engaged in community-service activities.

# State 4-H Programs Kick Off 3 Proven Mentoring Programs

The three featured programs in this 4-H National Mentoring Program issue are being replicated across the country by state 4-H programs. They have been recognized as effective mentoring strategies to reduce juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, and school failure. These three programs will incorporate core principles of positive youth development to improve the well-being of approximately 6,000 youth ages 8-17, especially underserved populations of Latino, African American, and children of incarcerated parents.

## 1 4-H Mentoring: Youth & Families with Promise (YFP)

DEVELOPED BY UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY

In an effort to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency, Utah State University (USU) Cooperative Extension Service has made it a priority to promote developmental assets in at-risk youth. Developmental assets include, but are not limited to, family support, relationships with nonparent adults, school engagement, resistance skills, and a sense of purpose. Currently, program sites across Utah serve an average of 20 youth per site and approximately 400 youth statewide.

4-H YFP is a prevention program originally created in 1994 to enhance the developmental assets of at-risk youth, ages 10-14. This program targets youth and families who have below-average school performance, poor social skills, and/or weak family bonds. Youth are referred to the program by school counselors, teachers, and administrators, as well as other youth-serving organizations.

### Program Components

Once youth are enrolled into the program, 4-H YFP utilizes a multi-pronged approach to achieve program goals.

- **One-to-One Mentoring** – Volunteer mentors work directly with youth to build academic and social skills.
- **4-H Activities** – Club involvement serves to enhance social competencies through leadership opportunities, community service, and group projects.
- **Family Night Out** – Group activities are designed to foster family bonds through experiential learning activities.
- **Mentor Support** – Mentors are supported by regular personal contact from their site coordinator to offer encouragement, provide on-going training, obtain progress reports, assure quality mentoring is regularly occurring, and to resolve any concerns or obstacles the mentors may be experiencing.

### Utah State University 4-H YFP Awards

2002 Model Program Evaluation Award (USDA, CSREES, CYFAR)

2003 Red Wagon Award (Utah Governor's Commission on Volunteers)

2006 National Program of Distinction (National 4-H Headquarters)

2006 Family Strengthening Award (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

## Outcomes

During the 2009-2010 program year, over 400 youth in Utah participated in 4-H YFP programs. Statistically significant improvements were reported by youth and parents in the areas of:

**School Experiences** (e.g., Doing well in school is important to my child; My child finishes homework on time)

**Family Experiences** (e.g., I get along with my child; My child respects me; We try to understand one another's feelings)

**Personal Characteristics** (e.g., My child tries problem solving without fighting; My child keeps trying even if things are hard to do; My child feels confident about him/herself).

Although not a targeted outcome, parents also reported statistically significant improvements in:

**Parenting Abilities** (e.g., I am able to handle the demands of parenting; I have consistent expectations for my child).

**Source:** Utah State University 4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise. (2009-2010). Outcome and Program Implementation Report.



## 2 4-H Living Interactive Family Education (LIFE)

DEVELOPED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

*4-H LIFE* is a family strengthening program that addresses the needs of children of incarcerated parents. The overall objective of *4-H LIFE* is to promote a strong, healthy, and nurturing family environment for children of incarcerated parents, while helping incarcerated parents and trained 4-H volunteers become positive role models and mentors. *4-H LIFE* originated as a partnership with the University of Missouri Extension, the Missouri Department of Corrections, and the National Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) Initiative. Findings from the evaluation of *4-H LIFE*'s pilot program at the Potosi Correctional Center, a maximum security prison in Missouri, indicate the program has helped participating youth to improve their social competencies, communication skills, and decision-making skills.

### Program Components

The *4-H LIFE* program has interwoven components designed to create stronger parent-child bonds, improve the quality of prison-based family visits, and increase youth decision-making and communication skills. Incarcerated parents are required to participate in weekly parenting, leadership, and planning meetings in order to qualify for the program. Children of offenders who are involved in *4-H LIFE* are also enrolled as members of county 4-H programs and are mentored by 4-H volunteers.

- **Parenting Skills Class** - Incarcerated parents who participate in the *4-H LIFE* program attend regularly scheduled parenting skills classes to develop and improve the skills needed to interact in a positive, age-appropriate way with their children.
- **Planning Meeting** - At the monthly planning meeting, incarcerated parents work with MU Extension faculty, Department of Corrections staff, and volunteers to help design and plan the 4-H youth and family activities for the upcoming 4-H family/Club meeting. The original *4-H LIFE* group at Potosi also uses this time to plan fundraisers for the 4-H Club youth members.
- **4-H LIFE Family Club Meeting** - The *4-H LIFE* family Club meeting takes place monthly during visitation at the correctional center. Children, their incarcerated parents, and caregivers work together on traditional 4-H activities such as arts and crafts, demonstrations, and other curricula-based activities focused on topics such as communication, decision making, and problem solving. Working together as a family on 4-H activities gives children an opportunity to show their parents their ability and intellect. It also gives the parents an opportunity to show their children that they can provide caring parental guidance.



“ It gives you a chance to get to know your kids better and to help them to try and not make the same mistakes that you did and maybe wind up in a place like this. ”

-Scott, Father, *4-H LIFE* Charter Member

## AAG Robinson and OJJDP Acting Administrator Slowikowski Discourage the Use of Scared Straight Programs

Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs Laurie Robinson and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Acting Administrator Jeff Slowikowski addressed the troubling nature of scared straight programs in the February 1, 2011 edition of the *Baltimore Sun*. They discussed how the use of scared straight programs to prevent delinquency is ineffective and can harm youth.

A study by Anthony Petrosino and researchers at the Campbell Collaboration analyzed results from nine scared straight programs and found that participants were up to 28 percent **more likely** to offend in the future. As a result of such evidence, the U.S. Department of Justice does not support scared straight-style programs, and instead focuses on programs that research has proven effective, such as the *4-H LIFE* mentoring program, which uses positive relationships to modify youth's behavior.



To read the full article in the February 1 edition of the *Baltimore Sun*, visit: <http://bit.ly/fQWVze>

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## 4-H Tech Wizards

DEVELOPED BY OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY



The mission of *4-H Tech Wizards* is to provide a culturally responsive, after-school, small-group mentoring program. *4-H Tech Wizards* capitalizes on interest in emerging technology for youth ages 8-18 as a way of involving underrepresented youth and their families in learning basic life and workforce skills and aspiring to post-secondary education, productive jobs and careers, and community engagement. *4-H Tech Wizards* engages underserved, underrepresented youth in a tiered mentoring program with science, technology, engineering, math education (STEM), and after-school tutoring. The use of high tech tools serves as the “hook” that brings the youth into the program and keeps their interest. During the school year, youth engage in an intensive series of afterschool experiential, hands-on learning activities with real world applications. In the summer, they have the opportunity to participate in a summer capstone camp, service learning project, or internship. At the same time, parents of the students are offered the assistance and education they need to support their children in their educational achievement. Three key

principles are infused into *4-H Tech Wizards* including small group mentoring, community service, and extensive cultural outreach. The program helps youth aspire to post-secondary education, productive jobs and careers, and community engagement.

### Program Description

Professionals specializing in emerging technologies connect with youth in a group mentoring setting. Youth are in cohorts of ten to twelve, with three to five mentors per group. The *4-H Tech Wizards* curriculum has three skill levels delivered over three years. During this time, youth develop skills in website development, video and podcast production, GIS and GPS technologies, LEGO robotics, and newer technologies through real-world situations. Youth also volunteer 15 hours annually in technology-related service learning projects benefitting the larger community.

*4-H Tech Wizards* enhances learning by providing the targeted student group with technology training which is delivered in partnership with 4-H, schools, volunteers, libraries, non-profits, and other community partners. Students learn STEM related skills from adult mentors who become positive role models for the students to emulate. Additionally, students are taught important life skills, such as goal setting, problem solving, public speaking, and decision making.

### Results in Washington County, Oregon

In Oregon, *4-H Tech Wizards* is a bilingual, family-supported, afterschool program capitalizing on youth’s interest in technology. In the program’s 8 years of delivery:

- **95% of participating youth have completed the program**
- **95% have demonstrated mastery of all skill competencies**
- **85% have annually completed 15 hours of community service**
- **95% have graduated high school**
- **70% have pursued post-secondary education**

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