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UWEX AmeriCorps*VISTA Success Story

By Haley Weisert, VISTA Member

Continuing to Bring 4-H Afterschool to Everyone 4-H Afterschool is back for another year. Last year the clubs were started with high hopes and positive intentions to keep the program going for years to come. This program allows youth to participate in 4-H which can be a difficult program for families with working parents to participate in. Long hours at one or more job, financial struggles, and time barriers can deter participants to join 4-H. These youth also may be left unattended during after school hours due to the same social restraints. 4-H Afterschool gives these underserved youth the opportunity to participate in meaningful afterschool programs that not only provide educational activities but allows them to do so in a safe, caring, and supervised environment. To ensure another successful year, Weisert immediately began to foster and build upon the relationships established with the Baraboo School District from the previous year which included Community Education Director Donna Baker, and all principals from South, East, Gordon L. Wilson, and North Freedom Elementary. The four schools began club holding meetings twice a month from 3:00-4:30 PM with a smaller attendance rate than last year. However, after the first meeting attendance has already shown increases that will carry over throughout the school year. Discussion of clubs starting at Jack Young Middle School and Bluffview are currently in process. Weisert would like to see an afterschool club started with the Reedsburg School District by late fall or early spring. Each club is run by volunteers found within and around the community. Weisert's recruitment started at the high school by presenting to the Key Club and Student Council to find assistant volunteers. From there she went to the UW-Baraboo campus to present to three different psychology classes and set up a table in the commons area in search of capable adult volunteers. A total of eighteen volunteers were recruited, 6 adults from UW and 13 high school students compile the volunteer roster. Volunteers have undergone multiple trainings which include a two hour orientation and a one hour program discussion/evaluation from Weisert and a four hour volunteer workshop from Baker and Jessica Jens, 4-H Youth Development agent. The training sessions were funded by the MetLife Training

Grant obscured but not used by the 08-09 VISTA. Each club is showing an increase in enrollment. Attendance of volunteers and club members is recorded each meeting to ensure proper documentation. A short, simple evaluation of clubs is to be done by members at the end of each month to make certain each member is satisfied with their membership. To date, all members and volunteers are still enrolled within the program.