

Heidi Vanderloop's Success Story for October through December 2009 **Leadership Opportunities among Older Youth in Pierce and Dunn County**

Situation

Frank Ginther, the Pierce County 4-H Youth Development Educator approached me in July 2009 hoping that I could provide leadership to the Older Members Organization Silent Auction at the Pierce County Fair. Through a successful auction raising \$1300, Frank challenged me to take leadership within the program as he had witnessed my positive interactions with older youth in Pierce County. This organization did not have consistent leadership in a few years and needed reviving. Over the past few years regular meetings were not held, officer positions remained unfilled and youth only went on the social trips planned by either the Program Assistant or Summer Agent. Not only did he want me to revive and create a sustainable Older Members Organization but wanted me to work on the Leadership Retreat for older youth in Pierce County and actively work with the 4-H Ambassador Committee. He also encouraged me to make connections with area school districts in hopes to expand the reach of 4-H to underserved audiences in Pierce County.

In Dunn County, my VISTA role changed significantly in early September since the office had no 4-H Youth Development Educator. Sue Pleskac, Deb Jones and Kristen Bruder worked on a model for the office to provide 4-H coverage until Dunn County hired a new educator. My responsibilities under this model included creating more sustainability among volunteers in Dunn County 4-H, assisting with Winter Camp and creating a sustainable Officer and Leader Training to provide future leadership to Dunn County 4-H.

Response

Pierce County

I selected a specific group of youth to attend a visioning session in August 2009 to revitalize the Older Members Organization. These youth I had either met through programs I worked with over the summer or were recommended by Frank. We discussed potential plans for this program and what need existed for the Older Members Organization.

In September the Ambassador Committee held interviews for the 2009-2010 Ambassador Team. This year we decided to not take all applicants as the committee decided that being an ambassador is an honor and a privilege. Through this interview night we created new objectives for the organization and hoped that youth would take more ownership in the program.

In November, I started planning for the Leadership Retreat and how to make this a beneficial experience to the youth in Pierce County. This including looking over past retreat documents and working with Frank to develop an agenda for the day. This also included finding a speaker who could talk about leadership opportunities on a broader spectrum. I invited Jackie Johnson to speak about her Camp Counselor program, Service Learning group and Fifth Grade Leadership Team.

Dunn County

Through guidance and help from Marie Witzel starting in September, I embarked on creating a sustainable Officer Training and Annual Leader's Training. I attended the St. Croix County Annual Leader's Training to get an idea of the Shake, Rattle and Roll curriculum. Through experiencing the curriculum, I decided that the two trainings could be combined in to one. The adults and teens would attend the first two sections of the Shake, Rattle and Roll curriculum together and work together to strengthen their club experience. Also, many of the younger teens do not have their driver's license and Menomonie is located a significant distance from the outlying communities; this way they would be able to carpool with their leaders. Our Teen Leader and Ambassador group decided to facilitate the officer part of the training while I facilitated the rest of the Shake, Rattle and Roll curriculum. Through my guidance and use of the curriculum, the teens prepared for the officer training as I got the supplies and equipment ready.

Meeting with Jackie Johnson, we started planning for Winter Camp and how to incorporate older youth as counselors for the program. Through these meetings we discussed how to promote leadership to these youth and give them a meaningful winter camping experience. After selecting our four counselors, we developed training materials and held two trainings for the camp program.

Results & Evaluation

Pierce County

At this August meeting it was decided Older Members would remain primarily a social organization, with quarterly meetings to determine upcoming social events. We also decided that youth would take an active role in deciding and planning the events, creating more ownership to the program. Through our Older Members Kick-Off in September 2009, we held officer elections and filled all eight officer positions at this meeting. We also decided our social events for the upcoming months including a corn maze, the annual Mall of America trip and Christmas dinner, and the February Ski Trip. Through these events, we have seen more active participation in Older Members among more youth in Pierce County. More importantly, the youth that are coming have not been the most involved youth at the county level. Hopefully their involvement with Pierce County 4-H Older Members will springboard these youth into other older youth leadership opportunities such as trips, camp counseling and the Ambassador program.

The Pierce County Leadership Training had nine youth attend over Christmas Break for the all day event. We covered curriculum from Shake, Rattle and Roll, officer training, parliamentary procedure and team building activities. Jackie Johnson came to talk about leadership programs she does including the Service Learning group that she has in Chippewa County. This stimulated conversation about Service Learning here in Pierce County including the annual Service Learning trip with Buffalo and Pepin Counties. Based on

discussion, many youth were interested in this trip and how they could help people in need or experience a culture very different from in Western Wisconsin.

Through Ambassador Interviews and the first Ambassador meeting, the Ambassador Committee had many discussions about the future of the program. Traditionally the group has been the promoters of Pierce County 4-H at parades and the fair. Instead, we would like the group to have a more meaningful service projects than in the past which would mean they would help out with 4-H Afterschool in the Ellsworth School District, plan the Cloverbud/Explorer Day Camp programs and volunteer at a soup kitchen in the Twin Cities. By doing these activities, we hope to challenge their current thinking, give them a larger world view and work with sustainable programs to help those in need.

In Pierce County, I succeeded in making connections with Prairie View Elementary School in the Ellsworth School District to expand the reach of 4-H programming to underserved audiences. Prairie View is a school with many students that qualify for free and reduced lunch and where an active afterschool program already exists. Through this program I hope to provide a taste of 4-H to the youth, the Four Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development, training for the current staff and having the Ambassadors help with the program.

Dunn County

The Annual Leader's Training and Officer Training was a success from many standpoints. Through evaluation and discussion with the General Leaders and other leaders present, this was the type of training needed in Dunn County. This also gave me valuable insight to where the program is headed and a starting point for the new 4-H Youth Development Educator as many of the leaders did not know what resources the 4-H website can provide along with the Extension Office and wanted a time for program sharing. Fifty-five people attended the training, thirty of these being teen officers. I received positive feedback from the officers that the Teen Leaders did exemplary work and provided positive role models and that the officers learned how to successfully fulfill their positions. Through the night I discovered a lot excitement towards hiring a new educator.

Winter Camp recently occurred the last weekend in January and was a great learning experience for Jackie and myself, the teen counselors and the youth who participated. Nineteen youth campers attended the overnight camp to learn more about leadership, how to identify their own leadership style – task or social or with comparison to the *Wizard of Oz*, which used the leadership styles of commanding, inspirational, and supportive. By identifying their own leadership style the youth can figure out what role they can take on in their club, group project or society. The youth also had the opportunity to teach an activity as a group to gain confidence and help bring ideas back to their 4-H club and motivate them to take on leadership positions in the county – through camp counselors, Ambassadors, Service Learning or other programs.

Through these programs, we intend to expose the youth to different lifestyles and backgrounds than their own here in Pierce and Dunn County. These programs hope to get

more youth involved with local leadership opportunities within 4-H and within their county and be active in decision making process to help those in need and prevent themselves and others from falling below the poverty line. Through this I hope to impact the lives of those who live in poverty in the communities I work with but also inspire the youth that are participating in leadership programs to become engaged citizens who give back to their communities as well.