

Summer 4-H Teen Event: “Developing Leaders for a Diverse World”

The *Developing Leaders for a Diverse World* Summer 4-H Teen event was held June 23 – 25, 2006 at the Lake Wenatchee YMCA Camp near Leavenworth, WA. The event was sponsored by the Washington State University 4-H Youth Development Program and the Washington State University Extension Diversity Initiative. Youth were involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the event. The outcomes of the event were to increase:

- leadership skills in communicating and working with others,
- ability to recognize and welcome human differences, and
- self-responsibility skills.

Fifty-three youth and eleven adults participated in workshops and recreational activities throughout the weekend. The workshops were focused on increasing cultural competencies around communications, leadership, accepting differences and self-responsibility.

The WSU Life Skills Evaluation System (<http://cahedb.wsu.edu/lifeskillstest/index.html>) was used to gather demographic information and assess life skills learned in the program. Of the fifty-three youth who attended, fifty completed the evaluation for a response rate of 94%. The age range of the youth was 11 – 18 with the majority of the youth being in the age category of 14 – 17 years (n=43). The respondents were about half female (n=24) and male (n=26) with 36 of the respondents being white/Caucasian, 7 being Hispanic, 3 Asian/Pacific Islanders, 2 American Indian and 2 racially mixed. Sixteen of the youth were currently living on farms, 14 were from towns under 50,000, 12 were from cities over 50,000 and 7 were from rural non-farm areas.

Eighty-four percent (84%) of the participants self reported that they made gains in the life skills of communication, accepting differences, leadership and self- responsibility. The greatest gain reported was in the leadership skill of using different leadership styles to assist a group in meeting its goals. Teens also gained skills in communication, specifically learning how to clearly state thoughts, feelings and ideas to others and how to listen carefully to what others say. In the area of accepting differences youth reported growth in treating people who are different than them with respect. And lastly, teens gained skills in doing what is right for them when in a group.

When asked, “What was the most important thing you gained from attending this event?”, teens responded with comments such as:

- “...get to know people before you judge them.”
- “...how to respect others in different ways.”
- “...that words are the most hurtful tool.”
- “...really understand what you say, someone might take it? a different way than meant.”
- “...a knowledge of how diversity directly affects us.”

From the information gained on the evaluation we found that the event goals were met and teens enjoyed the learning and practicing of new skills. Most of the participants indicated that they would like to attend another event of this type. One teen stated, “This event gave me a new outlook on life.”