4-H Afterschool Programs Vital to Youth Development

The Need: Youth development research shows that youth are consistently faced with societal challenges, forcing them to distinguish between good and bad choices, in most cases, facing these challenges alone. Youths’ physical and emotional safety during out-of-school time is a focal point of many foundations, researchers, policy-makers and educators, who have determined that the unsupervised hours from 3-6 p.m. are the most critical.

Serving the Need: N.C. 4-H Afterschool, a focused effort within North Carolina Cooperative Extension’s 4-H Youth Development Program, helps 4-H and other organizations that serve youth create and improve after-school programs in urban, suburban and rural communities across North Carolina. N.C. 4-H Youth Development works directly with 1,100 Afterschool programs in schools, community centers, faith-based organizations and home child care centers. In 2005, the program directly impacted approximately 35,655 youth. In 2006, that number increased to 39,419.

Impact beyond North Carolina: 4-H Afterschool programs provide youth development training to after-school program staff, make hands-on curricula available to youth in after-school programs, organize 4-H clubs in after-school programs, develop quality after-school programs in which young people learn leadership, citizenship and life skills and partner with community organizations such as museums and science centers to improve attitudes about math and science. Students from underrepresented communities gain skills needed to compete in formal science classrooms through Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs that help them prepare for competitive careers in the global economy. 4-H Afterschool programs help young people become adults who are contributing members of society.

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