



Youth, Families, Community

PHOTO: 4-H

4-H Goes Virtual

4-H youth development programs are a hallmark of the Cooperative Extension Service. As young people were isolated in their homes across the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic, 4-H educators quickly pivoted their in-person programming to virtual platforms to keep youth active and engaged.

Successful examples include:

- In **Kansas**, 100 4-H'ers invested 1,700 hours of learning after they were challenged to work on a 4-H project or area of interest for 30 minutes every day for 30 days.
- **Arkansas** 4-H professionals hosted a virtual Teen Leadership Conference that welcomed 180 youth from throughout the state to learn about 41 topic areas.
- In **North Carolina**, 4-H'ers used their sewing skills to make 241 masks for grocery store employees, bus drivers and cafeteria workers.
- **Indiana** 4-H ambassadors found creative ways to help their peers establish a sense of belonging.
- In **California**, Extension educators united to provide virtual engaging summer activities for youth peer interactions and foster youth-adult partnerships. More than 70% of 69 youth agreed virtual camps provided them opportunities to explore something they really care about, and 62% reported their camp participation helped them feel more connected to other youth.
- In **California**, 4-H leaders trained their members to be “disease detectives” through remote instruction on public health professions, virus transmission, vaccines preventative measures and more. Many participants said they shared the information they learned with others.
- Extension agents in **Florida** adapted quickly to COVID-19 restrictions on in-person youth development programming by offering both 4-H members and non-4-H youth more than 40 virtual educational experiences. Nearly half of the 1,859 youth who registered were non-4-H members.
- Extension professionals in **New Mexico** and **Tennessee** worked together to develop “Outbreak Squad,” an online game designed to help youngsters learn how people in

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professions from healthcare to research to education work together to stop pandemics. The game has been played more than 3,000 times.

- A **Georgia** 4-H agent helped keep a 69-year tradition in her county alive by moving its annual livestock show to a virtual, video-based format. It gave the young exhibitors the satisfaction of showing off their efforts in the livestock program and competing for prizes – a bright spot while their state was under a stay-at-home order. Helping the vital potato industry continue to thrive is of utmost importance for potato researchers in **Oregon**, **Washington** and **Idaho**. This tri-state collaboration has produced 40 improved potato varieties with better resistance to diseases. In the past 10 years, the value of tri-state varieties has increased by approximately \$190 million. These varieties are now grown on more than 143,000 acres in the Pacific Northwest, with value to growers estimated at \$600 million.