



Youth, Families, Community

PHOTO: ANDREA OMAR

Exposing youths to educational activities during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic caused many institutions and organizations across the country to shift how they deliver programming to reach target audiences, including maintaining a connection with youths. Through various educational opportunities, several institutions offered hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) kits and other valuable activities to engage students and boost awareness.

Successful examples include:

- In the summer of 2021, the **New Mexico** Agricultural Experiment Station hosted two sessions with a total of 13 students entering grades 6-8. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, participation was fully online. During the week, youths played and evaluated existing games, analyzed gameplay, developed media and delivered a game review on Zoom. Youths also participated in a research study to investigate the impact of a virtual insect pinning lab on interest in STEM and entomology.
- A \$15,000 4-H at Home Grant allowed the University of **Georgia** 4-H to support the creation of lesson plans and materials for the National 4-H Council related to plant biotechnology for 4-H youths in grades 6-8. Through six lesson modules, the goal was for youths to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of plant and crop production and plant biotechnology, while exposing them to potential career opportunities. To ensure high-quality, interactive and fun lessons, Georgia 4-H piloted three of the activities during 4-H Summer Camp offered at Rock Eagle 4-H Center, where more than 1,000 youths benefitted from STEM kits.
- With Computer Science Pathways funding through National 4-H, **Alabama** 4-H put together CS-in-a-Box program kits designed to connect youths to computer science and STEM through unplugged outdoor activities. The kits contained program materials designed for youths to engage their head in coding experiences, their heart in positivity and mindfulness through icebreaker activities, and their hands in unplugged computer science outdoors, providing a 4-H experience that contributes to improved

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health. More than 1,000 youths benefitted from this experience. There was also an increase in participation by girls and children of different racial or ethnic groups, military families and rural communities.

- When young people in **Kentucky** were isolated and unable to discuss social justice issues with their peers, University of Kentucky 4-H professionals joined with the College of Agriculture Food and Environments Office of Diversity to create Critical Conversation, giving youth a virtual platform to discuss difficult issues. This project led to the creation of the Social Justice Leadership Board, where 90% of youth participants say they feel empowered to create change in their communities.
- The University of **Idaho** Extension 4-H Youth Development program provided youths with quality assurance education opportunities. Many do not understand the role they play in end-product quality. Therefore, youths were taught that quality assurance is a promise that they make by being involved in the livestock industry to raise the animal to be a safe, wholesome product for the consumer. A test after the project revealed the students gained knowledge.
- **Louisiana** 4-H filled the void for youths and families by creating the 4-H Virtual Recess Social Media Series. A total of 61 daily educational modules were developed and disseminated between March 16 and May 29, 2020. Collectively, the virtual recess series reached more than 506,970 people. The 4-H Virtual Recess, Clover Connections, Clover Challenges and Field Trip Fridays paved the way for modern outreach and technological advancement in 4-H programming across the state.million.