

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

4-H member field trip provides fun, real-life nutrition experiences

AT A GLANCE

4-H youth explore how our food — from plants to animal products — is grown, harvested, processed and distributed on a field trip while learning how to fill MyPlate the healthy way.

The Situation

According to a 2014 study by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), U.S. students receive less than eight hours of required nutrition education each school year, far below the 40 to 50 hours that are needed to affect behavior change. Additionally, the percentage of traditional schools providing instruction on nutrition and dietary behaviors decreased from 84.6% to 74.1% between 2000 and 2014.

Given the important role that diet plays in preventing chronic diseases and supporting good health, University of Idaho Extension, Minidoka County 4-H program knew we needed to address this topic by giving our youth more hours of nutrition education through instruction and engagement activities. As the team was brainstorming, we decided that a field trip relating to MyPlate would be the perfect solution.

Field trips can be a great contribution to the 4-H philosophy of learning by doing. As a team, we wanted our 4-H members to observe and participate in real-life 4-H project-related experience rather than from texts, and from real objects rather than photos.



Highway to a Healthy Harvest 2022

Youth in Minidoka County were able to have hands-on engagement at each stop on the Highway to a Healthy Harvest.

Our Response

A grant from the Idaho Community Programs provided funding for our program, “Highway to a Healthy Harvest,” which provided 27 youth and six adults with a backpack filled with goodies, including a MyPlate themed plate. Youth were given instructions on what the field trip was going to look like. At each stop, they were given a food item to add to their MyPlate so that, by the end of the day, the MyPlate would be filled. We boarded a bus and traveled to the following locations:

- Poteet Farms — Here we learned about the importance of soil on the potato industry. We also learned the processes that potato farms use including tilling the soil, planting, harvesting, distribution and storage. The youth were each given a huge

“real” Idaho potato to fill the vegetables section of MyPlate.

- Whitesides Dairy — Here we learned that dairy farm families work hard to take good care of their animals and land to produce safe, high-quality dairy products for us to enjoy. The youth were able to tour the dairy and discussed dairy farm management, milking, how technology is utilized and safety. The youth were each given their choice of chocolate, strawberry or white milk and a cheese stick to fill the dairy section of MyPlate.
- Great Harvest Bread — Here we were able to tour the facility and see how the different types of baked goods are prepared, from the measuring of ingredients to the mixing and forming of the dough to the actual baking process. After the tour the youth ate lunch, which consisted of a sandwich made from Great Harvest bread, chips, drink, a pickle and a cookie. This filled the grain section of MyPlate. At the completion youth were asked what type of bakery food was their favorite and overwhelming they said the cookies.
- Vicki’s Country Gardens — Here we learned the need for healthy soil and how to maintain a compost system (collect material, chop, mix, sift), and we also learned the need for worms, plant seeds and seedlings, and mulch. We also were able to discuss how the garden takes care of us. Youth explored perennial spaces and how people around the world today use plants for food, medicine, art and materials. The youth were each given a container plant to start a garden of their own at home as well as an apple to fill the fruits section of MyPlate.
- Maier’s Meats — Here we were able to tour the different sections of the slaughterhouse (walk-in cooler and freezer, large cutting room equipped

with cutting and packaging equipment, large display room, large cooker-smoker, etc.) and were taught what took place in each section. All equipment used was also described to the youth. Sanitation was discussed and we were shown a demonstration of how every part of the pig is used. The youth were given beef jerky to fill the protein section of MyPlate.

Program Outcomes

Prior to getting on the bus for the Highway to a Healthy Harvest field trip, the participating youth were asked to describe what a typical meal would look like for them. Only 2% of the youth answers fit into the MyPlate daily recommendations. On average, the majority of the youth surveyed consumed too much fat, saturated fat and sodium, and not enough fruits, vegetables or calcium.

The same questions were asked upon the return of the Highway to a Healthy Harvest field trip and the youth’s answers of what a typical meal should look like went up by 85%. The youth were also able to analyze what they needed to change in their diet right now to make healthier food choices. The youth loved the field trip aspect of this program and said:

- “Traveling to all the different places that effect our food really opened my eyes.”
- “I am a visual learner and this class let me touch, feel and listen while I was learning.”
- “I feel like I gained a better understanding of what food supply looks like.”

Collaborators and Co-Sponsors

We would like to thank the following collaborators and co-sponsors: Idaho Community Programs Grant, Poteet Farms, Inc., Whitesides Dairy, Great Harvest Bread, Vicki’s Country Garden and Maier’s Meat.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Becky Hutchings, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • bhutchings@uidaho.edu

Jeni Bywater, 4-H Program Coordinator • University of Idaho Extension, Minidoka County • 208-436-7184 • jbywater@uidaho.edu

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