

Maryland New Communities Project: Garrett County
2005-2006 Year Two Report

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from reports and information provided by site staff*

Program Description

The After-school Extension Enhancement Project in Garrett County brings Extension staff into partnership with many other youth-serving organizations as part of a coordinated after-school effort. Active since September 2004, the program consists of after-school themed sessions taught in 1.5-2.0 hour lessons. School age youth (K-8) attend 8-15 sessions throughout the school year. Most sessions are taught at the after-school site, however overnight camping trips are facilitated at the Western Maryland 4-H Center. The project meets an identified need by bringing the resources of Extension into the new system of after-school programs across the country. The resources made available include use of an outdoor education center, computer lab, life skills curricula, and the expertise of the 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator and Faculty Extension Program Assistant. After-school youth benefit from a variety of experiential education sessions including outdoor programming, agriculture education, and interactive programming.

Program Implementation

Staff

Staff for the After-school Extension Enhancement Project includes a 4-H Extension Educator, a faculty extension program assistant, an AmeriCorps VISTA member, and teen volunteers. Staff members cooperate to plan and implement various after-school programs.

Location

The project is located in the towns of Kitzy Miller, Friendsville, Loch Lynn, and Grantsville that have local Title I elementary and middle schools where after-school activities are based. (See map).

Facilities

The facilities at the centers provide the necessary space, materials, and resources for planned 4-H curricula during the after-school programming. A culminating over-night event is also included in programming. There are necessary materials for crafts, nature hikes, canoeing, fishing, shooting sports, and a team-building course available for using during the over-night trips.

Partners

This program is made possible with various partners:

- The Garrett County Partnership for Children and Families, Inc. is involved in coordinating an after-school advisory committee, assisting with evaluation efforts,

providing training support to after-school sites, and providing funding for sustainability.

- The Garrett County Board of Education is also involved with the program by assisting with data tracking for assessment of after-school outcomes. The Board of Education shares resources to improve educational outcomes and assists with recruiting and retaining participants.
- The Frostburg State University AmeriCorps provide VISTA member and Summer Associates to staff the programs.
- Community Action Committee, Inc. coordinates after-school programs at Friendsville, Loch Lynn and Grantsville, and Kitzmiller, collaborates with Extension staff in assessing program needs, and provides staff and parent support during Extension programs.
- Garrett County Health Department coordinates after-school programs at Accident elementary and Southern Middle School, collaborates with Extension staff in assessing program needs, and provides staff and parent support during Extension programs
- Western Maryland 4-H Center provides their site for overnight experiences. .
- The local newspaper supports the program by providing coverage of the project and by highlighting youth activities, which increases community awareness of the available programming
- A new partnership with WISP Resort developed to begin the “Bear Claw Science Lab” for providing physical experiments with snow tubing.

Outreach

The project participated in the National “Lights On After School” Rally which included guest speakers, a cook-out, live music, challenge course, hikes, floating luminaries on the lake, songs, bonfire, and drumming! This past year, 200 people were in attendance. Additionally, the Extension 4-H educator made public presentations about the project at various community events and meetings such as the Garrett County Extension After School Project Curriculum presentation, a county-wide after school staff workshop in August.

Activities

Number of Children

The children served by the after-school project are school age youth (K-8) attending Title I elementary and middle schools in Kitzmiller, Friendsville, Loch Lynn and Grantsville. 147 youth in the county have been served through extension. Kindergarten through sixth grade participants total 115 students. Older youth enrolled, grades 7-8, totaled 32 students in the past year. Of the students enrolled in after school extension programs, 49% are considered in poverty.

Kinds of Activities

Children participate in various activities when attending the after-school program. After-school sessions follow a theme. The three major themes have been:

1. Environmental education at the Western Maryland 4-H Education Center, which includes educational topics such as owls, trees, and birds. Social and recreational activities include low-ropes course, canoeing, overnight camping, singing and drumming.
 - a. Modules within this theme have included:
 - i. Camping and Campfire Cooking
 - ii. Youth Development
 - iii. GPS Basics and field experiences
2. Agriculture Literacy which offers field trips to working farms and visits to after school sites by 4-H members and their animals. These activities teach food and fiber production as well as the roles of young people and families on local farms.
 - a. Modules within this theme have included:
 - i. Animal and Animal Products
 - ii. Botany and Horticulture
3. 4-H Curriculum is used as guides for experiential education activities of interest to the various groups. Programs in the past year have included aerospace, theatre, and outdoor cooking.
 - a. Modules within this theme have included:
 - i. Building and Launching Model Rockets
 - ii. Electricity workshops
 - iii. Systems of the Body
 - iv. Computer Lab Training

Within the theme, children participate in different educational activities, indoors and outdoors. Field trips have included a visit to a local farm and an overnight camping trip at the Western Maryland 4-H Center. While at the camping trip, children participated in activities such as crafts, fishing, shooting sports, scavenger hunts, a ropes course, and nature hikes.

Results

The After-School Extension Enhancement Project in Kitzmiller, Friendsville, Loch Lynn, and Grantsville has provided enriching after-school activities as well as educational trips to many children in Garrett County. Staff has observed that children are engaged in the after-school activities and are interacting well with each other. Additionally, children appear to greatly enjoy the field trips.

Efforts have begun to more formally measure primary and secondary outcomes. A simple evaluation questionnaire will be given to students to complete that assess what they learn from the themed after-school activities and their satisfaction with the program. Administrators of the themed activities, or modules, will also be asked to complete questionnaires after each module to evaluate how they perceive the receptivity of the module was on the students and how the module may be improved.

Program expansion has lead to additional modules, as well as overnight camping trips made available to Accident Elementary and Southern Middle School. Although Southern and Accident are not classified as Title I schools, the Garrett County Extension Enhancement Project is committed to outreach that would include all 7 after-school programs in the county. This is a program objective for Year 3.