

4-H is a community of more than 7 million diverse young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Through clubs, camps, school-based and after-school programs, 4-H makes a positive impact on the lives of urban, suburban and rural youth and their families. Youth learn and grow through participation in fun, hands-on learning experiences in areas including science, engineering, technology, healthy lifestyles and citizenship. "4-H connects families to programs and resources to help them succeed and grow stronger," says National 4-H Council President and CEO Donald T. Floyd, Jr. "With the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards 4-H is able to reach rural families who often find themselves isolated from opportunities and supports to help secure their children's futures."



# 4-H

# UTAH

## 4-H MENTORING: YOUTH AND FAMILIES WITH PROMISE

### 4-H UTAH

Award-winning Program: 4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise

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CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

## 4-H FOR FAMILIES

For many families in rural Utah, isolation from the resources and supports available in larger communities leaves many pre-teens and teenagers looking for ways to broaden their futures. The Utah State University Extension Service responded in 1994 with 4-H Mentoring: Youth and Families with Promise (YFP), a family-focused combination of 4-H activities, one-on-one mentoring and skill-building group activities each month at Family Night Out.

When families join 4-H, an initial training supports parents and children in building and strengthening life skills, including decision-making, responsibility and collaboration. YFP takes full advantage of this foundation as it positions parents in leadership roles in family clubs, where parents shape activities for their children that lead to the social and academic supports families need to achieve their aspirations. Craig Dart, YFP's Statewide Coordinator, says, "Parents have a hand in everything we do."



MENTORING IS NOT JUST ABOUT  
SUPPORTING A CHILD. IT ALSO SUPPORTS  
PARENTS IN THEIR ROLES AND HELPS FAMILIES  
WORK TOGETHER TO MEET THEIR GOALS.

—Brian Higginbotham, Ph.D., Family Life Specialist, Utah State University

## FAMILY TIME, FAMILY STRENGTHS

Family Night Out—a combination of communal meals, opportunities to strengthen family and parenting skills, and group activities reinforcing 4-H's targeted life skills—brings together the parents, children and their one-on-one mentors. YFP trains mentors from the families' own communities to spend several hours each week with the young people, helping expand their horizons and reinforcing parents' own efforts.

"Parents embrace the work with mentors as enriching to their children's lives, helping them develop the interpersonal skills that foster success," says Craig Dart. "Kids don't live in a vacuum. They need supportive adults throughout their community, and they need strong relationships to build on."

YFP has expanded to serve families in 25 of the state's 29 counties as parents and mentors coordinate their support of young people. Independent evaluations and parent and mentor questionnaires suggest that participating youth perform better in school and experience many fewer family conflicts than their peers. Parents also report better home environments, a sense of greater hopefulness in their children and more opportunities to spend time with them talking about positive subjects.

"By combining mentoring, 4-H, work with parents and community building," says Dart, "YFP is getting concrete results: a sense of mastery for parents and mentors, a sense of belonging for young people and a sense of togetherness for families."

## FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National 4-H Council, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize outstanding 4-H programs that work to give children in rural communities what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.