

# Chelan County Extension 4-H Eco-Stewardship

## Resilient Youth, Sustainable Environment

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### 4-H ECO-STEWARDSHIP CHANGES BEHAVIORS

The 4-H Eco-Stewardship program engages approximately 3,000 students annually in adventure-based learning. Research suggests that outdoor adventure programs reduce negative youth behavior by increasing feelings of positive self-perception, providing ways to gain knowledge, skills and abilities, and increasing understanding of positive peer relationships (Garst, Schneider, & Baker, 2001).

Participants in 4-H Eco-Stewardship (originally established as the 4-H Forestry Education Program) describe their achievements as important because they are doing what they term “real work.” The skills participants take away from the program are durable and relevant to their communities. WSU Life Skills evaluation indicates 95.3 percent of our students report significant gains in life skills. These results have tremendous ben-

efits, preparing youth to make sound decisions as confident, caring adults who are engaged in their communities.

### CHANGING BEHAVIOR SAVES TAXPAYERS MONEY

Each year three to four adjudicated youth participants finish the summer portion of the program, complete their court requirements and return to school. Research shows an annual savings of at least \$60,000 per juvenile kept out of the juvenile justice system. On that basis, the 4-H Eco-Stewardship program saves Chelan County Juvenile Justice between \$180,000 and \$240,000 annually. Over the past seven years, that's a minimum of \$1.2 million in savings to the system.

Department of Juvenile Justice research reveals that encouraging the social development of children, youth, and families reduces delinquent behavior.



The results? A return as high as \$7.16 for every dollar spent (Sansfacon and Welch 1999). By investing in the 4-H Eco-Stewardship program, Chelan County could see a potential annual return as high as \$1.32 million in delinquency-reduction benefits.

Slashed federal budget to agencies working at the local level reduce their capacity to perform important work. 4-H Eco-Stewardship Program has been able to cover the gap. After seven years, they consider this program a resource partner in maintaining access to public lands.

### need more information?

- <http://www.ncw.wsu.edu/4h/ecostewardship.html>
- <http://www.ncw.wsu.edu/4h/challenge/>





## READY FOR THE WORLD

Another measure of the success of the 4-H Eco-Stewardship program is in the willingness of local agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service, to hire program participants. USFS managers report that they give 4-H Eco-Stewardship participants' special consideration for the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP), since they have already completed "on the job training" related to safety procedures, tool use and agency protocols that others do not have when making application for summer positions.

Additionally, 4-H Eco-Stewardship program, participants who previously did not plan on going to college have chosen to enroll in regional colleges and universities. Several are now specializing in natural resource science fields.

### TRANSFORMING LIVES, CHANGING MINDS

#### *Beauty Queen Blossoms in Forest*

"You get really focused on knowing who you are instead of just thinking of yourself as a girl," Irma Farias said. Farias is a former Manson Apple Blossom queen and 4-H Eco-Stewardship participant who worked on a U.S. Forest Service fire crew during the summer of 2007.

Farias joined the U.S. Forest Service STEP program. Through STEP, Irma spent time in each department: botany, timber, wild-



4-H Eco-Stewardship participant Irma Farias. Photo: Don Seabrook/Wenatchee World; used with permission.

life, trails, and the fire crew, which she ultimately chose as her major interest area. "My parents thought I was joking," Farias said. "They thought I would be doing office work or answering phones."

Farias learned to catch salmon with her bare hands, dig trails, and work without showering for days. Eventually, she ditched the makeup and fingernail polish. Farias tried to skip the four-day wilderness trip during the 4-H forestry program, said program director Kevin Powers. "She couldn't bring her mirror, and there were no electrical outlets for her hair dryer; that came as a bit of a rude shock to her," Powers said. "Once she got out there and pushed her boundaries, we all sort of watched her blossom."

(Adapted from an October 25, 2007 *Wenatchee World* article by Rachel Schleif)



#### *Right off the Bat*

At U.S. Fish & Wildlife's bat hotel in Leavenworth, Wash., mosquitoes check in, but they never check out. That, at least, is one of the goals behind the collaboration between six science students at Cascade High School, WSU Extension, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Pesticides kill mosquitoes efficiently, but with environmental and economic costs. Bats are just as efficient at eliminating the biting bearers of West Nile virus. Encouraging bats in their role as natural pest controllers will cut pesticide use and improve fish habitats by keeping pesticide drift and runoff from entering streams.

"It's a hands-on experience," student Pedro Barrera told the *Wenatchee World*. "I'm going to remember that I was a part of this project. I learn by doing it, instead of out of a book."

(Adapted from a May 10, 2007 *Wenatchee World* article by Rachel Schleif)



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**Are you interested in participating in a WSU Chelan County Extension program? Call Ray Faini, (509) 667-6540.**

For more information on programs offered by the WSU Extension system, please visit <http://ext.wsu.edu>.