

An Urban Approach to 4-H



**Healthy Lifestyle Program
Boom in June Summer Day Camp for
Parks and Recreation Centers**

Issue

DeKalb County, situated within Metropolitan Atlanta, is a growing urban county with many urban concerns for youth. In the 176 years since its founding, DeKalb County has grown from a quiet village of 2,500 to a bustling and diverse metropolitan county with over 710,000 residents. During the 2006-2007 school year DeKalb County had more than 102,300 students who attended 2 charter schools, 86 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 21 high schools and 18 specialized centers.

Program

The 4-H program offers opportunities for many youth to develop into capable and contributing citizens. Attracting youth from urban communities can present challenges. Without a family history of 4-H participants, these young people do not readily come forward to enroll in 4-H clubs. DeKalb County Extension staff realized that a different approach to 4-H programming was needed to reach more youth, and to enhance leadership development, environmental education and violence prevention programming for youth.

Program staff worked collaboratively with local agencies and groups in the community to provide the needed programming for school age youth in an urban area. Unique collaborations with partners ranging from home schools to charter schools, the local school system, recreation center clubs, other youth groups such as the YMCA, the juvenile courts, the local department of family and children's services have been utilized to build programs that impact more than 5000 youth.

The *DeKalb County 4-H Expansion and Enrichment Program* was developed in 1977 to enable county extension staff and DeKalb County Schools staff to extend 4-H programs to more system schools. The program was designed so that a teacher or staff member designated by the principal at each local school is trained by county 4-H Extension Service staff to deliver the 4-H program. Clubs meet before or after school. Club leaders and local school officials decide meeting dates and times. A memorandum of understanding with the school system was developed to deliver the program in system schools. The goal of the program was to involve local school staff to strengthen positive adult relationships with enrolled youth and help them reach their potential.

Focus groups were conducted with leaders, school board staff, and community leaders. Changes were implemented as indicated by focus group discussions and evaluations. A partnership was also initiated with DeKalb County Parks and Recreation to offer 4-H Programs in 9 parks and recreation centers. Both programs increased public awareness of 4-H by successfully marketing 4-H to community leaders, elected officials, school officials and parents.



Results

During the 2006-2007 school year more than 3,500 DeKalb County School Youth participated in the DeKalb County 4-H Program making it the second largest program in the state of Georgia. Thirty-five elementary schools, 10 middle schools, three charter school and five high schools sponsored a 4-H Club in their school. During the school year, clubs were active in 9 park and recreation centers, 11 community clubs-- including two in homeless shelters and 2 at Boys and Girls Clubs-- and 1 home school group. Ten (10) New York Life Community Club Sites were added during this club year. Club members learned parliamentary procedures by participating in bi-weekly club meetings and developed leadership skills through county programs such as officer elections and officer training.



Each club participates in county-wide community service projects such as the Coat and Blanket Drive or DeKalb Clean and Beautiful. Most clubs are involved in a variety of community service projects that range from visits to nursing homes, school and community cleanup projects, canned food drives or letter writing to troops. Teen leaders, adult leaders and volunteers work with an advisory council to assist in delivery of county program.



- ✿ Evaluations from surveys indicated that leaders and teachers observed improvement in 84% of students.
- ✿ Seventy six percent (76%) of students showed significant improvement in the ability to get along with others.

- ✿ Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the participants demonstrated improvement in showing respect for teachers and others.
- ✿ Ninety four (94%) percent indicated they have learned to do what they say they will do, think before they act, to treat everyone fairly and to know they have choices when decisions are made.
- ✿ Club Leaders conducted 680 club meetings with 1,360 instructional hours using the county program character education curriculum.
- ✿ Club Leaders and Extension Staff conducted 360 club meetings with 720 instructional hours in violence prevention programming that targeted life skills, critical thinking, problem solving, accepting differences, teamwork, and goal setting.

- ☘ 4-H Club Leaders conducted 200 club meetings with 400 instructional hours in environmental education curriculum developed by county staff.
- ☘ EFNEP FAN Club Leaders and Extension staff conducted 144 club meetings with 288 instructional hours in nutrition education.



- ☘ 78 clubs in the county program operated in 10 parks and recreation centers, 35 elementary schools, 3 charter school, 2 home schools, 11 community clubs - including 2 at homeless shelters – 10 middle schools, 2 Boys and Girls Clubs, and 5 high schools. 10 New York Life sites were added increasing high school enrollment by 500%.
- ☘ Six parent meetings were conducted during County Project Achievement, Officers Training, and County Council Meetings to discuss the county 4-H program, parent involvement in the county program, and to assist in planning the 2007 Awards program.



Partners

- DeKalb County Board of Education
- DeKalb County Schools (space, leaders)
- DeKalb County Parks and Recreation (space, leaders)
- DeKalb County Board of Commissions (funding)
- The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension (funding)
- New York Life
- Georgia 4-H
- National 4-H Council
- University of Georgia College of Agriculture
- Hands on Atlanta
- VSA Arts of Atlanta
- Author Blank Foundation
- Teen Works Career Program





Club Support Offered by DeKalb County 4-H Program

- ✿ Schedule Overnight Environmental Education Field Studies at one of five 4-H Environmental Education Centers in Georgia.
 - ✿ Provide speakers to support school events such as career days, or special assemblies to promote character, manners, healthy lifestyles and financial literacy for grade level, multi-grade levels, entire school or center.
 - ✿ Provide insurance for 4-H events.
 - ✿ Coordinate technical assistance from the Master Gardener or Horticulture Team with outdoor classrooms, wetland studies, butterfly gardens, wildlife habitats and beautification projects.
 - ✿ Provide character education and/or parent education programs for PTSA or special programs.
 - ✿ Suggest healthy lifestyle choices for food service staff and after school program staff.
 - ✿ Provide staff development and training or technical assistance for after-school programs as a part of a national after school initiative.
 - ✿ Train school youth leadership teams including honor societies, academic and non-academic groups and class officers.
 - ✿ Award scholarships and recognition to high school seniors based on level of participation in 4-H program.
 - ✿ Provide volunteer opportunities for teens as teen leaders, parents and community helpers at the county, cluster, district, state and national level.
 - ✿ Provide lesson plans to all grade levels to support:
 - ❖ Food Safety
 - ❖ Life on the Farm
 - ❖ Environmental Education
 - ❖ Outdoor Classroom
 - ❖ Container Gardens
 - ❖ Character Education
 - ❖ Manners
 - ✿ Provide opportunities to participate in educational events such as:
 - ❖ Georgia National Fair
 - ❖ Life on the Farm (K-8)
 - ❖ Judging Events
 - ❖ Project Achievement
 - ❖ Conferences and Forums at State, National and International Level
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