

4-H Youth Challenged to Serve Utah this Month

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Utah State University Extension 4-H issued a challenge to all Utah 4-H programs to complete one service project in December, providing the entire state with service from 4-H youth this month.

According to Megan Hendrickson, USU Extension 4-H program coordinator, the challenge was issued in an effort to provide 4-H youth an opportunity to accomplish one of the four 4-H purposes – hands to larger service.

“The counties have taken this challenge and run with it,” she said. “The youth have been incredibly creative in serving their communities while working within the COVID restrictions. They have strongly considered people who the pandemic has hit the hardest, and many have focused their efforts on the 65-and-older populations.”

Hendrickson said several counties have written letters and cards, made and sent gifts and decorated the windows of their local retirement and assisted living communities. Others have focused their attention on youth in need, collecting food, gifts and other donations in partnership with various children’s service organizations.

A few service highlights include:

Garfield County held a Family Fun Night and Christmas Light Parade. To promote family bonding around this busy time of year, 4-H youth assembled and delivered (drive thru style) Christmas kits to over 150 families in Panguitch. Included in the kits were a family meal, gingerbread house kits, movie night pack, family games and toys for smaller children.

Wasatch County 4-H members recognized several needs in their community, then created project kits to address them. The youth completed the kit at home, then dropped it off at the 4-H office to be delivered. Projects included making dog and cat beds for Paws for Life, making and freezing cookie dough for their local Children’s Justice Center and making baby blankets for the Wasatch County Health Department.

Summit County hosted a pet food drive in conjunction with the Coalville Food Pantry Distribution Center. The youth designated drop-off points for dog and cat food, then collected the donated items for the local food pantry, and it was distributed to those in need.

Piute County youth assisted their local crisis center by making and donating stress pillows. The county provided all the materials, except batting, which they asked the youth to donate. The youth made the pillows at home, then delivered them to the crisis center.

State 4-H youth leadership groups also participated in the challenge, in addition to their county service. The state family and consumer sciences ambassadors delivered 50 handmade quilts to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a non-profit organization that provides beds to families and children in need. A total of 43 4-H clubs from 17 counties made 77 quilts. An estimated 215 youth and 92 volunteers were involved in the project.

Vernon Parent, the 4-H service working group chair, said service is a major cornerstone of 4-H and is where a culmination of skills, motivation and awareness are brought together to make a difference.

“We can talk about the impacts of service and how research shows that these actions build self-efficacy and resilience, but the fact is, most people serve because they know deep down that it’s the right thing to do,” he said. “Oftentimes all it takes is for one individual to step forward and show the way, and it truly amazes me how generous people are if given the opportunity. We are so impressed with our youths’ willingness to rise to this statewide service challenge. There are many, many people whose lives have been made better because of their actions.”