



Alabama 4-H Provides Character Education Resources

Impact Statement

The Problem:

One of the most pressing issues facing the United States and its youth-serving organizations is how to best facilitate leadership and citizenship. To become productive and contributing individuals who can be effective and proactive in determining the course of tomorrow's world, Alabama's youth must develop positive leadership knowledge, attitudes and skills.

What's Been Done:

A 1995 state law mandates that public schools teach 10 minutes of character education every day. That's a challenge for many teachers because they have no character education curriculum to develop lessons and activities.

One goal of Alabama 4-H and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System is to provide teachers with easy-to-use character education materials that require no advance preparation.

More than 100 Extension personnel are trained in character education. In 2003, Extension introduced a new curriculum, Workplace Ethics, targeted at high school audiences.

Extension staff devoted almost 1,000 days to character education, reaching more than 30,000 young people.

Extension also fostered a wide variety of citizenship-building activities. Consider the following as a cross-section of the programs offered.

Mid-Winter Teen Retreat—About 100 young people prepared more than 1,000 care packages and personal notes for overseas military personnel.

Fan Mail to the Troops—More than 400 youth wrote letters to overseas troops.

Youth Leadership Day—Twenty-six Marshall County young people visited the county courthouse and visited with officials about their jobs and duties.

Harvest Day—Middle school 4-H club harvested satsumas, oranges and lemons from a local grower to distribute to nursing homes and assisted living facilities in the county.

Why We Care:

Alabama 4-H is committed to helping the state's schools, businesses, civic organizations and individuals encourage character development in young people. Providing both training and the curricula, Extension is lifting some burden from teachers as they strive to meet the requirements of the mandated character education.

These programs can make a difference in young people's lives. Extension has an excellent opportunity to help educators make a positive change in their students. In a way, it helps safeguard the future by helping young people grow into responsible adults with characters solidly rooted in key values.