

Extension Develops Positive Youth Leadership Skills

With support from the Dickinson County Endowment Fund and numerous community leaders, a 9-week exploratory class, “*Ricochet: An Extreme Leadership Adventure*,” was conducted with all 6th grade students in the Spirit Lake School District.

Nearly 100 youth participated in adventure-based experiential learning activities lead by a core group of volunteer community leaders. They explored 5 Dimensions of Leadership: Leadership Information, Leadership Attitudes, Communication Skills, Decision-Making, and Stress Management.

Students identified and invited community leaders to their classroom and completed needs assessments and leadership service projects. Student projects included making tray favors for patients at the county hospital and local care centers; making and donating fleece baby blankets to a teen pregnancy center; reading to kindergarteners; and making food packets to be sent overseas and to homeless families in the midwest.

As a result of this leadership experience, the school district is planning to make Ricochet I part of the 6th grade exploratory classes, and offer Ricochet II to 7th graders next year. Eventually, Ricochet III will be offered to 8th graders.

A student evaluation described leadership as “the ability to influence and support others in a positive manner for a common goal.” Ricochet is one example of how Extension is helping foster positive youth development in Dickinson County.



“Helping youth develop positive leadership skills is one of the five outcomes we strive for in ISU Extension youth development programs. Providing a safe environment with caring adults from throughout the community was a key to the success of this youth leadership experience.”

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For more information about this program or other Iowa State University Extension resources, contact the Clay County Extension Office at 712-262-2264. Information is also available on the Iowa State University Extension website at www.extension.iastate.edu.

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