SUMMER 2016

FourWord

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A NEW GENERATION OF
Young Leaders
CYLA PROGRAM

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IOWA 4-H FOUNDATION
FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES for IOWA’S YOUTH
A New Generation of Young Leaders Find Their Place in 4-H

The CYLA program connects 4-H to more youth across Iowa

“[4-H] has helped me discover my passion and has made it easier to accomplish my goals.”

— Jessica Mancillaz, 4-H member

“We love certain things 4-H does, but we don’t know the entry point — we don’t know how to get involved with it.”

4-H members have heard this sentiment too often. While about one in five youth are currently involved in 4-H, the goal is to involve all Iowa youth. With the Culturally-based Youth Leadership Accelerators (CYLA) program, the organization is one small step closer to doing so.

The CYLA program started in 2015 in response to the changing demographics in Iowa. CYLA opens the door for youth from grades 8 to 11 who wouldn’t traditionally participate in 4-H, the goal is to involve all Iowa youth. With the Culturally-based Youth Leadership Accelerators (CYLA) program, the organization is one small step closer to doing so.

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“A lot of our youth who are underrepresented and underserved — sometimes when we talk about STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) especially — they don’t feel a sense of agency. They don’t feel that it’s theirs, that their cultures brought this, because it gets lost in the history,” says John-Paul Chaissen-Cárdenas, state K-12 and 4-H youth development program leader.

With the CYLA program, the disconnect is diminishing. Youth learn about their ethnic roots and dive into the 4-H program by becoming a 4-H member and attending one of two free three-day retreats.

2015 marked the first Maize Retreat, with a focus on Latino and Native American cultures. Nearly 100 students from across Iowa participated. In 2016, 4-H hosted 160 youth at the second-annual Maize Retreat and introduced 80 others to a second retreat that focuses on African and African American culture called Ujima — named after the fourth tenet of Kwanza meaning “collective work and responsibility.”

Parents are also invited as chaperones and leave as 4-H advocates, many becoming volunteers in their communities.

Youth meet the first day of the retreat at the Iowa State University campus. All six ISU colleges welcome these youth into their programs and allow them to experience a “day in the life” of a college student.

“They spend the day doing experiments or playing with the virtual reality lab, or doing other fun, hands-on activities, which is our motto,” says Chaissen-Cárdenas.

Then youth head to the 4-H Center in Madrid and begin ethnic and leadership studies, discussing why their cultures are valuable and important and what it means to be a leader. They continue these discussions and activities on day two. The program incorporates activities and workshops like Aztec dancing and African drumming to enrich the teachings.

The third day involves traditional 4-H camp activities, like rope climbing, archery, mammal trapping and scavenger hunts.
Donors Help Ensure Access to the 4-H Program

Providing financial aid to Iowa 4-H’ers is an essential role for the Iowa 4-H Foundation. Together with our partners, we work to ensure that no young person is unable to participate in the 4-H program because of financial limitations.

New and returning 4-H’ers have the opportunity to apply for financial assistance to help with the program enrollment fee, summer camp registration and group travel. In 2015, over 160 4-H’ers received more than $12,500 to participate in the 4-H program across the state of Iowa. Financial aid is funded in part through the 4-H’ers for 4-H campaign and through donors like you. Significant gifts from people like the Marion E. Jerome Foundation of Decorah lead the way in making these opportunities possible for young people.

As the 4-H program continues to grow and reach new audiences, the availability of financial aid becomes even more important. A $30 gift covers the enrollment fee for one 4-H’er and gives that young person the opportunity to learn, explore and grow in 4-H. To learn more or to make a gift, visit www.iowa4hfoundation.org/donate.

After the retreats, students are sent back to their counties with a mission to continue their involvement, whether through service work, creating and participating in a club, or giving back to the community, for the next year.

Marshall County is a great example of the potential outcome of the CYLA program. In 2015, 11 youth from the county attended the Maize Retreat and returned home to create a 4-H club in the Marshalltown High School. The club made it their goal to address the high levels of high school dropouts, the low numbers of Latinos taking the ACTs, and how to prepare for college. The group varies from 15 to 30 members, and is always growing.

Club members partake in workshops and attend conferences throughout the year, like the Iowa Latino Youth Summit in Iowa City.

“After attending the conference, youth were excited to develop a community service project and explore various career paths,” says Caleb Carver, Marshall County youth coordinator for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “This continued interaction with the youth began to develop a sense of belonging, the first of the four basic needs of youth.”

The 4-H leaders in Marshalltown gave the youth the reins to lead the club. And these young leaders have developed a club that helps them and their peers prepare for college by creating resumes, practicing interviews, and visiting local businesses to explore career options.

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4-H leadership will continue to look for ways to impact all of Iowa’s youth. They are considering adding a third retreat in 2017 to serve the Asian-American and Pacific Islander population.

“We are guided by who is in our state. We’ve looked at the demographics of youth, and what we know is that the demographics of those youth have changed,” says Chaisson-Cárdenas. “We’re striving hard to serve all Iowa youth.”

“I feel safe here to meet new people.”
— Daniela Andrade, 4-H member

“I never had the opportunity to do something like that, and this group has helped me to understand that it is good to help other people.”
— Adan Rodriguez, 4-H member

“4-H is really helpful . . . it teaches us to be more active in the community and that I can make a positive impact.”
— Jazmin Ibarra, 4-H member

“Every day might not be good, but I have a chance to try and change that.”
— Luis Ledesma, 4-H member

“Activities like this through 4-H are helping me get ready for college.”
— Carlos Dorado, 4-H member