

Greg Yost Memorial Youth in Leadership Award

Kasey Bozeman & Gypsy James: Liberty County 4-H, Georgia

Purpose of Program: Liberty County is home to Fort Stewart, the largest military installation east of the Mississippi River. The 3rd Infantry Division Headquarters, seven tenant units (including US Army Reserve and Army National Guard units), and the Georgia Garrison Training Center are all located at Fort Stewart. Youth face unique circumstances associated with challenges of having one or both parents serving in the military. Frequent deployment, long-term training missions, etc. can potentially have detrimental impact on a youth's development. Emotional distress, separation anxiety, decline in academic performance, anger issues, and apathy are all common issues children and youth may exhibit. Liberty County 4-H staff work with Fort Stewart Child, Youth, and School Services to provide after-school 4-H activities for children and the School Age and Youth Center. These programs provide after-school care for military youth that attend schools located on Fort Stewart. Older, active 4-H members (7th–12th grade) have the ability to work with and mentor younger 4-H members in our traditional after-school 4-H programs at the Extension Office. However, due to conflicting school schedules, these youth are not able to actively work with Fort Stewart 4-H'ers after-school.

Realizing that mentorship and educational programming can be beneficial for military youth experiencing challenges, it was decided that the Liberty County Junior/Senior 4-H Club would host a day of activities for the School Age Center youth (1st–5th grade) during a school holiday. The Liberty County 4-H staff gave the Junior/Senior club ownership of this project, allowing them to plan, implement, and evaluate their day of activities. The club chose a science theme because "we knew that lots of kids don't enjoy science in school. We decided that if we planned fun and educational science activities, hopefully we would be mentors to these children and inspire them to enjoy science," (Sophia Rodriguez, President).

Size, Scope, and Content of Program: Fourteen Junior/Senior 4-H'ers gathered at the Extension for preparation day. Youth had the choice to work individually or in teams to teach their science activity station. Each 4-H'er/team was required to research a science project, learn the basic science concepts behind the project, create a mini lesson plan, shop for or gather needed supplies, and test their activity. During the preparation day, youth learned the importance behind planning, preparing, and teaching a lesson. This experience was very valuable to 4-H members, with many commenting how they didn't realize how much went into preparing to teach a lesson. Because these lessons were being taught at the Fort Stewart School Age Center, the 4-H'ers had to pack and prepare all supplies from transportation to/from the center.

During the actual event, 47 youth for the School Age Center were able to participate in the program. The Junior/Senior 4-H members provided 10 educational lessons. Participants were divided into groups and each lesson was taught at the same time. Participants rotated every 15 minutes, so they were able to participate in all 10 lessons. The lessons that were taught were: elephant toothpaste (teaching about active yeast/fungi), fossil creation (teaching about archeology), magic milk (teaching about macromolecule lipids), butter making (teaching about states of matter), roller coasters (teaching about kinetic and potential energy), balloon blow-up (teaching about chemical reactions), strawberry DNA extraction (teaching about genetics), floating ping-pong ball (teaching about Bernoulli's principle), bottle rockets (teaching about air pressure), and neutral nancy (teaching about buoyancy). Tractor Supply donated funds to the Liberty County 4-H program that were used to purchase any needed supplies.

Youth Involvement: Having the Junior/Senior 4-H members plan and teach the science activities was paramount to the event's success. As their club leader, I simply gathered the youth together and presented them with the idea of leading activities for the youth at Fort Stewart. From there, the club president, Sophia Rodriguez, led the group in a brainstorming activity to determine the content of the activity. Science topics were decided by the club members because 1) it would be easy to offer a variety of lessons such as biology, chemistry, physics, etc., 2) many youth are not interested in science or struggle with science in school, 3) many of the materials were already available or would be inexpensive. After it was decided that a Science Day would be hosted, I contacted the Fort Stewart School Age Center as a formality and to arrange logistics.

The club decided to meet after school on multiple days to research their science projects, create miniature lesson plans, gather necessary supplies, and test their experiments. Club members worked together to offer advice and support to one another as they prepared their activities. As the adult, I simply served as the "overseer" of the project – providing supervision, assisting as needed, helping with the preparation of supplies, and offering feedback. On the day of the actual event, 4-H members met at the Extension office and carpooled to the Fort Stewart School Age Center. Other than minimal logistics, such as setting up the stations, my job was simple during the day. I walked around, observed, took photographs, and assisted as needed. However, the youth were the real leaders of the activities. Because of the preparation work that went into the

activity, they were prepared and successfully taught their lessons 10 times for 47 youth participants. It was truly a youth-led endeavor because they were the ones that planned, implemented, and evaluated the program. During our debriefing session after the activity, the overall feedback was positive and they want to take on another "4-H Day" in the summer. The biggest life lessons learned during the program were in the planning and execution stages. They didn't realize how much time, effort, and energy goes into planning and preparing for a lesson. I think it gave them a better appreciation for their teachers and other educators. They also commented how it can be difficult to teach the same lesson repeatedly and maintain a level of energy and excitement for the kids. Overall, the youth-led program was a very positive experience for everyone involved and will continue with improvements for the future.

Evaluation: Formal evaluations by both youth participants as well as the Junior/Senior 4-H club members were conducted.

Of the 14 Junior/Senior 4-H club youth completing the formal evaluation, all members "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that "as a result of serving as a teen leader at the 4-H Science Day at Forest Stewart School Age Center ...

- 1 – I know how to plan programming for younger youth
- 2 – I can lead activities for younger youth
- 3 – I can explain simple science concepts to younger youth
- 4 – I am more confident in my ability to be a leader

When asked "the most important thing I learned is ...", one youth commented, "be nice and help them when they don't understand." When asked "my favorite part of this activity was ...", another youth commented, "teaching a concept to children and giving back to the military community."

All 47 of the Fort Stewart participants completed a very simple evaluation after the activity. Participants were asked to "agree" or "disagree" with three statements. "After participating 4-H Science Day ..."

- 1 – I know more about science (93.6% agree)
- 2 – I enjoy science (95.7% agree)
- 3 – I learned something new (100% agree)

When asked "what did you enjoy best about 4-H Science Day?" comments included [sic]:

- I really enjoyed the elephant toothpaste because I got to touch the foamy, colorful toothpaste and I thought that was the most fun out of all of them.
- The butter making because now I can go home and teach it to my mom, dad, and brother.
- I enjoy best about science was that I got to do different things and I learn more about science.
- Meeting new people.
- I in goy science bee kus you're your 4H pepol or gob heprs.
- I had fun with the butter making activity and most of all I enjoy the activitys that where pland for me, and I learnd something new in the activitys and I ate the butter with some brind.
- I enjoyed being able to do everything the best. It was EPIC.
- I like how me and my friend had fun.
- I enjoy best is doing science and doing activitys with four age.
- I had fun with everything. I wanted to circle all of them, but I had to only circle 1. All the big 4-H's were all nice. This is the most fun I ever had!

Personal Growth: As a youth educator, there was an abundance of growth I experienced, too. This was an incredible opportunity, letting youth plan and implement their activity. They really got a first-hand experience of planning programming. Throughout the process, they were able to come to me if they had questions, concerns, or needed advice, but the process was something that was truly led by them. During the planning phase, most youth worked together (even if their activities were different) to support each other, gather supplies, test the activity, and provide helpful feedback. During the actual activity, I saw some 4-H members that are sometimes more reserved "come out of their shell" and really excel at leading younger 4-H'ers. The experience really made the older 4-H members work together as a team and celebrate their accomplishments. Due to the success of this activity, our Junior/Senior 4-H club plans to host similar days focusing on different topics (healthy living, engineering, communication, etc.) in the summer. This program also strengthened our partnership with Fort Stewart. The CYSS Program Assistants were very excited and asked for copies of the 4-H'ers lessons and for ideas on how to expand the lessons for the future.

February 17, 2015

Sophia Rodriguez
President, Junior/Senior Club
Liberty County 4-H
402 Quail Trail
Hinesville, GA 31313

To NAE4-HA Awards Committee,

I serve as the Liberty County Junior/Senior 4-H Club President. Being a 9th grader and elected to serve as the President is a great responsibility, and I have taken my duties seriously. This fall, our 4-H Agent, Ms. Kasey Bozeman, approached our club about leading a 4-H Day with Fort Stewart's military kids. I thought this would be the perfect project for us, and our club set off to work.

Fort Stewart is the largest military installation east of the Mississippi River. It is primarily located in Liberty County. Most of the young people in our community have parents that are in the military or where in the military. And if your family isn't military, chances are one of your friends, neighbors, teachers, sports coach, family you go to church with, etc. is. My dad was in the military, and I know there are challenges associated with having a parent in the military. Sometimes they are gone for long training missions – weeks or even months at a time. Sometimes they have to be up before the sun for PT or come home late after I have gone to bed. Sometimes they get deployed, and the separation can cause lots of stress. Add in the factor that they are in harms way and could get injured, it can be a very traumatic experience for kids.

Our event was planned for the Fort Stewart School Age Center. This center is a child care facility that provides before and after school care for kids in the 1st-5th grade. We struggled with trying to find something that we wanted to do with them ... maybe focus on communication? Teamwork? Healthy Living? Stress Reduction? We finally decided that it didn't matter so much the content of our activity as if did that we actually were they to form relationships with the kids. We finally chose a science theme because we knew that lots of kids don't enjoy science in school. We decided that if we planned fun and educational science activities, hopefully we would be mentors to these children and inspire them to enjoy science.

Because of our after school schedules, we decided the best time to host our Science Day would be on a holiday. First, we all gathered at the 4-H office to plan our activities. We worked individually or in teams of two to research different science experiments. For each experiment, we had to create a mini-lesson plan about the science information, materials needed, and how the experiment works. We also had to create posters with the name of our science station and information about the science topics. We worked with our 4-H leaders to shop for and gather supplies. We tested all of the experiments out to make sure everything would be a success.

In total, we had ten different experiments that taught different science concepts: elephant toothpaste, fossil creation, magic milk, butter making, roller coasters, balloon blow-up, strawberry DNA extraction, floating ping-pong ball, bottle rockets, and neutral nancy. These lessons taught about chemical properties, chemical reactions, buoyancy, genetics, fossils, kinetic and potential energy, and more.

We traveled to the Fort Stewart School Age Center on the Monday before Thanksgiving to host the workshop. In total 14 4-H'ers, 2 adult volunteers, and 2 4-H leaders participated in the project. First, we had 30 minutes to set up our stations. Then, the kids that were there divided into groups and rotated from station to station. Each activity lasted 15 minutes and every kid that was there got to do every activity. We taught 6 activities before lunch, had a lunch break, and then resumed teaching the activities after lunch. Once we were done, the kids had to complete evaluations, so we could learn what we could make better for next time. Before we left, we sang songs with the kids, taught them more about 4-H, and gave them all hugs goodbye.

There were 47 kids at the Fort Stewart School Age Center that participated in our activity. Additionally, the Program Assistants that work at Fort Stewart were able to watch us teaching the lesson as they monitored the kids. In fact, some of them even asked us for copies of our lessons and they invited us back for more activities. Because of the success of the activity, we plan to host another day in the summer with them. Not only did the kids get to learn about science, but they got to hang out with older kids. We formed relationships with them and were able to connect. We hope they know that there are older 4-H'ers that care about them, especially when they are upset or stressed.

The biggest thing that we all learned is that even one day of activities can really make the difference in others' lives. Being able to go there and work with these really helped us remember why it is important for us to support military families – and that we don't always have to create cards or send care packages. Offering fun events like the one we did is support too!

We also learned how important it is to be prepared when you are teaching and how much goes into planning a lesson. Most of us have never had to fully plan and teach an activity, and even though it was just 15 minutes, it really was a lot of work. We also learned that everything you need should be written on a supply list ... even if it is a pitcher for water! After reading the evaluations, we realized that when we work together, we are making a difference ... and it feels great!

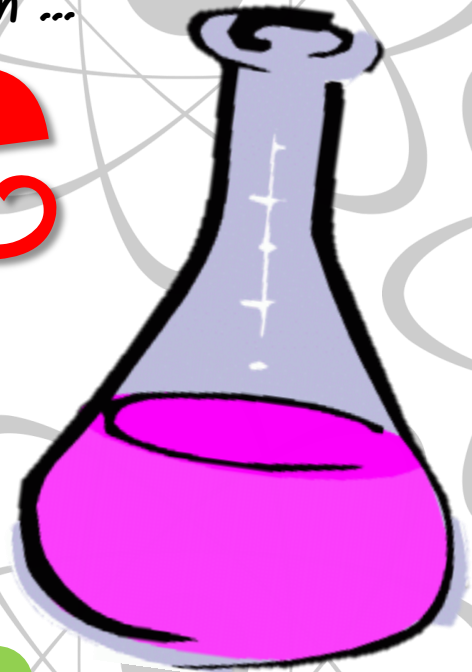
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sophia Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S".

Sophia Rodriguez

Liberty County 4-H invites all Fort Stewart School Age Center youth to participate in ...

SCIENCE Day



November 24, 2014
Beginning at 10:00AM
Fort Stewart School Age Center



Come join Junior and Senior 4-H members as they lead you through a day of exciting science experiments! You don't miss out this on this event!

Fossils

Butter
Making

Chemical
Reactions

Rocketry

Strawberry
DNA Extraction

Magic
Milk



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Liberty County 4-H

100 Main Street Suite 7130 • Hinesville, GA 31313
912-876-2133 • kaseyb@uga.edu • gmjames@uga.edu

www.ugaextension.com/liberty



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