



WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



4-H TEEN CONFERENCE

2014

BY THE NUMBERS

- 90% of participants reported an increase in skills of communication, decision making, and accepting differences; plus marketable skills, control over personal goals, and self-responsibility.
- 83% reported significant gains in exploring new careers, planning use of financial resources, and the use of sound judgment to set priorities.
- 91.8% recognized skills they needed to get a job.
- More than 2,500 students have attended the three-day Teen Conference since 2009, an average of 430 students each year.

Helping young people explore multiple and flexible pathways for a successful future

ISSUE

The last 10 years have been the most challenging decade in 50 years for young people to transition to adulthood, earn a degree, get a job, and stand on their own financially. Nearly 6.5 million U.S. teens and young adults neither attend school nor work. The employment rate for youth ages 16 to 19 has dropped 42% since 2000. In 2011, only 24% of 16- to 19-year-olds and 60% of 20- to 24-year-olds were employed. These youth are veering toward chronic unemployment as adults, and failing to gain the skills employers require in today's job market. When young people lack connections to jobs and school, the government spends more to support them.

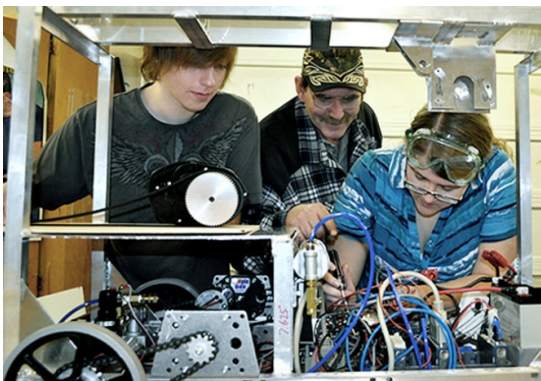
Yet, as young people struggle to gain experience and find any type of job, businesses cannot find the skilled workers they need to compete in the ever-changing, 21st Century economy. Part of the challenge is the gap between young people's skills and the qualifications needed for available jobs. More than three-quarters of job openings in the next decade will require skills obtained beyond high school. McKindsey Global Institute predicts that by 2020, the United States will fall short of workers with college and graduate degrees by 1.5 million, but will have a surplus of nearly 6 million unemployed individuals who have not completed high school. In 2011, the National Center for Education Statistics reported Washington's graduation rate was only 73.7%.

RESPONSE

To address these concerns, Washington State University Extension's 4-H Youth Development Program organizes and sponsors the annual 4-H Teen Conference to assist youth in finding answers for their future. The 3-day event, held on the WSU Pullman campus, focuses on identifying post-secondary educational options, exploring careers, and developing life skills, including workforce preparation. More than 60 workshops connect youth to educational and employment skills and options, provide support for transitioning from high school to college, and help them strengthen skills to move into the work force. Activities, networking, and mentoring connect youth to education and training pathways that prepare them for jobs and economic success. Young people with academic know-how, technical skills, and essential "soft skills" to hold a job, can launch a career.

Conference objectives include:

- Opportunities for teens of all backgrounds across Washington to come together to engage in educational programs applicable to their lives;



QUOTES

"I have learned how to better plan for my future. I now know what to do to apply for colleges and get accepted."

"The thing I have gained most from this conference is to believe in myself and know my dreams. I can reach my goals. Never give up!"

"I have learned about many new careers from attending this conference and now know about the different options available to me after high school."

"I know more about college and I am now more excited about my future."

"I learned what I need to do to be successful, how to get a job, be more healthy, and manage stress."

"I know what skills employers are looking for when hiring someone new, and I know now how to land a job."

"I learned how to prepare for college and picture myself living my goal."

"Even though no one in my family went to a university, I can."

- Increase college awareness as a critical component of college readiness;
- Promote independent and critical thinking about life decisions;
- Establish and increase self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-esteem;
- Promote the pursuit of knowledge, education, and personal and professional growth;
- Close racial and economic disparities regarding educational and employment success among students;
- Feature nationally known speakers, university faculty, staff and students, community members, and youth, as presenters to meet the varied needs of youth—combining education, training, and support services, with a strong relationship with adults; and
- Promote positive adult and teen partnerships through the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages.

Research demonstrates a positive return on investment for programs that advance academic, social, and career skills, including decreased unemployment and the achievement of higher levels of career attainment. Taxpayer burden will be decreased; for each 16-year-old out of school and out of work, the future lifetime taxpayer burden is \$258,040. The total taxpayer burden for all out-of-school and out-of-work youth ages 16 to 24 is \$1.56 trillion (Source: *The Economic Value of Opportunity Youth*; 2012).

IMPACTS

- Participants reported a 93% increase in their communication skills, decision making, accepting differences, marketable skills, control over personal goals, and self-responsibility, from pre- to post-event.
- In addition, 83% reported significant gains in exploring new careers, planning use of financial resources, and the use of sound judgment to set priorities, and 91.8% recognized skills they needed to get a job.
- Many young people show extraordinary motivation and responsibility when given the right opportunities. Teen Conference is such an opportunity to encourage excitement, direction, and success.



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