

LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY
4-H SUMMER CAMP

REPORT 2022



THE CASE FOR CAMP

Summary report and
budget request for 2023

Submitted to
Lewis & Clark County 4-H Council
and the County 4-H community
September 2022

THE CASE FOR CAMP

In 2022, we were pleased to bring back a full summer camp experience for Lewis & Clark County 4-H'ers. It was a well-earned getaway for kids after market animals were sold and fair projects were completed. It was a chance for them to unwind, have fun and make new friends as summer came to a close.

As we all know, the past several years have been tough on our families, and especially on our kids. With school closures and public safety measures during a pandemic, our kids' participation in recreational activities and social interactions greatly declined; enrollment in 4-H and other youth development programs dropped considerably. One report found that nationwide, K-12 student academics dropped measurably, leaving students on average five months behind on mathematics, and four months behind on reading.

4-H summer camp, too, was greatly impacted. In 2020, our camp was outright cancelled. In 2021, we cautiously brought back two day-long camps in Helena during June and July. Those 4-H teens who had grown up attending a full overnight camp every summer, were greatly disappointed when they had come of age and maturity to lead as a camp counselor, but were denied the opportunity through no fault of their own. It was a sorely-missed opportunity for growth and leadership, two of the great benefits in which 4-H excels.

In 2022, we were able to bring back summer camp as it was meant to be. We made some adjustments to how camp had been operated in the past, and we worked very hard to keep our costs as low as possible while still providing an enriching and fun experience. Many campers told us it was the highlight of their summer. Everyone came home with new friends and memories.

This report makes the case for the value of 4-H summer camp—as a county event as a vital social activity that deepens our 4-H community; meaningful experience that empowers our 4-H youth, and develops their communication and leadership skills; as a healthy social-emotional and recreational environment for our kids; and as a powerful recruitment and retention tool for

prospective 4-H members, current 4-H'ers and their families.



2022 CAMP PARTICIPATION

In 2022, Lewis & Clark County 4-H summer camp was attended by :



▶ **38 campers** ages 8 to 13

▶ **14 camp counselors** ages 13 to 16

▶ **4 adult chaperones** including a camp director, medical nurse and two leaders

Attendance was lower than summer camps from the past eight years. Traditionally, Lewis & Clark County has between 45 and 60 campers who attend. This lower rate can be partially attributed to, and reflected in the overall decline of county 4-H participation post-Covid.

Another factor may simply be that the county did not have a summer camp for two years, so there may be less awareness, and a hesitation in parents being comfortable with sending their kids to back to camp.

Those campers that did attend had a fantastic experience, and unanimously agreed that they would all like to attend camp again in 2023. We are confident that participation will rebound with promotion, continued

improvement, word-of-mouth, and through the continued leadership training and development of our camp counselors.



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL: A COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT



For many years, Lewis & Clark 4-H summer camp has served as a fun, exciting, and safe experience where kids can be kids, make new friends, be goofy, learn new things and create great memories. Over the years, it has been run with care and passion by outstanding 4-H volunteers.

Moving forward, we will continue to learn from our camp efforts, listen to the campers and their feedback, seek ways to make camp even more safe, more fulfilling, cost-effective and unforgettable. Here are a few of the changes we have made in the past two years:

► In 2021, without the costs of an overnight camp, we held two day camps that were open to all kids, regardless of whether they were enrolled in 4-H. With many activities focused around 4-H projects, We sought to expose kids to some of the awesome opportunities 4-H can offer.

► In 2022, we scheduled camp to occur after our county fair had concluded. We did this so that more kids who raise livestock could attend.

► After hosting camp at a facility south of Livingston for the past four years, we moved camp back to a dedicated 4-H camp facility at Loon Lake near Bigfork. With lots of water recreation, updated cabins and a great main lodge, our campers greatly prefer this location, and we were able to cut costs with a lower per-camper fee.

► We engaged both camp counselors and chaperones early to build a strong, prepared team of leaders.



CAMP COUNSELORS: AN UNPARALLELED LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Camp counselors are the heart and soul of our summer camps. Many county 4-H camps are planned and operated by extension agents and adult volunteers. That's not the case in Lewis & Clark County: Beginning in Spring, 4-H teens apply for and commit to a leadership obligation that helps them grow as inspirational mentors to young campers and spread the spirit of 4-H.

Camp counselors meet regularly from March through July to plan, organize and develop all the activities of camp. This includes crafts, educational workshops, group games, social interactions and challenges to build teams and friendships, and recreational activities like songs, skits, team competitions, field games and dances.

In addition to planning and operating camp, our teen counselors engage in preparedness for safety measures and conflicts, developing skills to encourage and inspire younger campers, and sociological training to help them effectively communicate with and appreciate the developmental differences between themselves and 8 to 13-year-olds.

For 4-H'ers who attended camp when they younger, it's a badge of honor to "pay it forward," and return to serve as a teen camp counselor. This year we had a number of teens who had not previously attended camp—all of them benefit from this unique leadership opportunity to serve, grow, and develop their skills. Many of our camp counselors report that it's one of best things about 4-H and one of the greatest achievements in their entire 4-H experience!



SUMMER CAMP: THE SPIRIT OF THE FOUR H'S



Here are just a few of the reasons how 4-H summer camp embodies the four pillars of the 4-H program, and why camp is a worthwhile investment in our youth:

HEAD

Camp offers educational workshops for growth and development. In 2022, some of our workshops included First Aid; pioneering skills; mindfulness; and fiction writing. A number of activities challenged campers with problem-solving, like deciphering codes and finding natural elements to create art. Every evening, counselors led their cabin mates in “reflections,” to be self-aware, practice gratitude, and to allow campers to express their thoughts, critique, what they experienced and what they learned.

HEART

Through activities like campfires, canoeing, dancing and skits, summer camp creates a safe and fun space for kids to relax, forget their troubles, let loose and allow their spirit to shine. Throughout the course of camp, we see the shyest kids overcome social anxieties and come out of their shells to express with joy and confidence; we see the most rigid and stoic kids get goofy, dance and sing; we see extroverted kids share their self-confidence and step up to encourage and help others; We see unlikely groups of varying age coalesce and form strong teams. In EVERY kid, we see them grow and become more self-aware.

HANDS

Campers put their hands to work sharing in responsibilities like washing dishes, sweeping floors and cleaning bathrooms. They apply their imagination and creativity assembling handmade crafts and artwork. Campers help each other out in the spirit of service and take pride in leaving the camp facility looking better than how they found it. At Lewis & Clark County summer camp, we see to it that our kids put their hands to use and remain engaged and active.

HEALTH

Campers enjoy nutritional meals and healthy snacks throughout camp to keep their energy up. We limit the availability of junk food and candy. They get lots of physical exercise through swimming, running, dancing and movement. Mentally and emotionally, campers get healthy doses of confidence-building, teamwork, wellness, challenge, social growth, expression and joy.

4-H SUMMER CAMP: WHAT WE LEARNED, AND HOW WE CAN IMPROVE MOVING FORWARD

Scheduling

With the goal of making camp available and affordable to as many kids as possible, we scheduled camp in August after our county fair. This helped kids who raise livestock attend after their animals were sold. Traditionally, our county held camp in June, but we were often faced with cold weather and rain, which limited some of our outdoor activities. An August camp blessed us with sunny days, comfortable swimming conditions, and long days that got dark just in time for a campfire. **A survey of our campers all agreed that this was a great time to hold camp, and we heard from many parents who also liked this schedule.** The only conflict mentioned was that some fall sports begin in August. Next year, we have scheduled summer camp a week earlier, **August 6-10, 2023**, to help accommodate sports, and we will leave later in the day on Sunday, for families just returning from vacations, or for those who wish to attend a church service that morning.

Our 2022 camp was held from a Sunday to Wednesday, four days and three nights including travel. We heard from both campers and counselors that our days were so packed with activities, that they found themselves exhausted, with not enough down time for relaxation. In 2023, we plan to add one additional day to camp, leaving later on Sunday, with the same amount of activities more spread out to allow time for more reflection, to recharge their energy, a less-rushed schedule, and an earlier bedtime.



Expenses

Our camp counselors and chaperones worked very hard—and successfully—to keep our costs low. We planned workshops using upcycled materials; counselors collected and brought materials from home for activities and events. We returned to a camp that offered a very reasonable per-camper fee (\$8 per meal per day, which included lodging, meals and the camp facility); Counselor Sam Klatt applied for and received a \$200 donation from the Helena Optimists Club specifically for camp; Nurse and chaperone Alyssa Johnson donated all the materials for a First Aid workshop; Camp leader Luke Duran donated pizza, snacks and beverages for camp counselors during all of our pre-camp training meetings. Chaperones Michelle King and

Gretchen Munding gave generously of their time and energy assisting our counselors, gathering materials, and making last-minute runs for snacks and supplies. At every turn, we did what we could to keep costs low.

Budget

In 2022, we raised the camp fee to \$130. With rising gas prices and inflation, we felt this was a reasonable charge that most 4-H families could still afford. We hoped this fee would cover all expenses: travel, meals, camp facilities and lodging, workshop materials, and a camp tee-shirt and bandanna. We ALSO hoped this fee would cover the cost of sending our teen counselors to camp for free, in thanks and recognition for their months-long commitment to planning and preparing camp.

We almost did it. Even with a 2022 budget from the county 4-H Council, we strove to be revenue-neutral. Our teen counselors attended camp for free, we kept supply and materials purchases to a minimum, we provided tee-shirts and bandannas to all campers. Most importantly, we had an awesome camp that all campers greatly enjoyed. When all the expenses were tallied however, we came up short by about \$1000. If we had our normal and expected attendance of 50 to 60 campers, the \$130 per-camper fee would have covered the entire cost of camp and kept it revenue-neutral.



4-H SUMMER CAMP: THE BOTTOM LINE

Considerations for 2023

- ▶ With the addition of an extra day for camp, it's likely that we will need to raise the camp fee again. Even with this year's fee of \$130, 4-H camp remains a real bargain compared to other camps in Montana, which often charge between \$300 and \$700 for a similar experience.
- ▶ In 2023, we may not be able to offer camp for free to our camp counselors. Even with a fee increase, the costs of camp next year may not allow for this gratuity. We hope we can at least offer a reduced fee for teen counselors in exchange for their service.
- ▶ If camp attendance increases in 2023 (and we predict that it will), we will need to charter a second bus to accommodate travel to and from camp. This is a necessary and unavoidable expense: the Loon Lake 4-H camp is roughly four hours from Helena, and it's unreasonable to ask parents to drive their kids that far to attend camp, and then drive again to pick them up. Not to mention the increased risk of more cars on the road and the cost of gas. With inflation, it's also likely that the bus service will increase their fee in 2023.
- ▶ We hope we can continue to offer campers a tee-shirt to remember their experience. Shirts are also a great team-building item, but it may need to be a cost we have to cut.
- ▶ We would love to offer campers a more substantial craft or item of value that they create while at camp and can bring home with them. While glitter jars, Gods-eyes and magazine strip mosaics are all well and good, we would love to step up the quality of what they create. But of course, higher-value crafts cost more money.
- ▶ It's been proposed that teen counselors plan and host a 4-H day camp in Helena, just for Cloverbuds who are not mature enough to attend summer camp. This would be a great offering for Lewis & Clark 4-H families with younger kids, and an excellent training opportunity for our teen counselors to practice their leadership skills. But again, there would be increased costs to facilitate this event.

WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF CAMP, AND THE BENEFITS IT OFFERS TO OUR 4-H KIDS. WE BELIEVE IT IS WORTHY OF INVESTMENT. WE BELIEVE IT SHOULD BE ENDORSED AND SUPPORTED BY THE 4-H COUNCIL. IF YOU AGREE, WE HOPE YOU SPEAK UP FOR OUR KIDS AND SHOW YOUR SUPPORT.

LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY 4-H SUMMER CAMP: OUR COMMITMENT AND BUDGET REQUEST



OUR COMMITMENT

- ▶ Most of our 2022 teen camp counselors have already committed to participate in the planning and leading of 2023 summer camp. They recognize camp as an excellent county 4-H experience, an important event to plan, and a great opportunity to serve in roles of leadership and self-development.
- ▶ Our teen counselors are aware of the shift in support from the Lewis & Clark 4-H Council, and will commit to finding additional sources of funding for camp. They are willing to reach out to Helena philanthropic and community service groups, appeal to the county 4-H Foundation, and possibly hold a fundraiser.
- ▶ We will continue to seek ways to keep camp costs low while maintaining a quality camp experience. Ultimately, we hope to make camp better with each passing year, and will work to gather and grow support for camp. We will work to see that support translates to increased funding to improve camp, rather than see it wither on the vine.
- ▶ We will continue to report back to the 4-H community, and keep them informed on both the successes and lessons learned with each year of summer camp. We believe transparency and clear information are important for accountability, and for building trust and gathering support for 4-H camp.



OUR ASK

- ▶ Regardless of whether or not 4-H leaders and council members support 4-H camp, we understand that money is tight in our county 4-H program, and that the Council is seeking ways to address this. This challenge is not easy, and requires sacrifice and increased fees. The Council has asked that 4-H camp operate on a revenue-neutral basis. We respect this change, but request that the 4-H Council continues to show its support for 4-H camp by providing a “safety-net” in their budget. We will work very hard to operate revenue-neutral. We do not plan or intend to spend money for camp that is set aside in the 4-H Council budget. Rather, it would be nice for the Council to demonstrate they have some “skin in the game,” and provide this financial buffer in case unforeseen costs come up that 4-H camp income is unable to cover.
- ▶ In September 2022, it’s too early to determine a 2023 camper fee without knowing what some of our anticipated costs will amount to, let alone how camp attendance will be. With that in mind, **we respectfully request a line-item amount of \$2000.00 in the 4-H Council budget.** This is far less than has been approved and budgeted in past years. With revenue from camper registration fees, camp expenses that the Council covered in 2020, 2021 and 2022 have been much lower than this \$2000 request. Again, we don’t plan to spend the money, but just ask for this financial safety net for unforeseen costs that could arise.



2022 LEWIS & CLARK COUNTY 4-H CAMP FINANCIALS AT-A-GLANCE

Attendees: Campers, Counselors, Chaperones:
55 total

► Revenue

Revenue from camper registration fees

37 campers @\$130 ea.\$4810.00

Sponsorship from Helena Optimists Club

Donation\$200.00

Total revenue.....\$5010.00

.....

► Expenses

Loon Lake 4-H Camp fee (accommodations and meals)

\$72 per person\$3960.00

First Student bus charter

1 bus.....\$800.00

Materials and supplies

.....\$1290.36

Total expenses\$6050.36

Less camper registration revenue.....\$4810.00

Loss.....(-1040.36)



I enjoy being out in the woods and a cabin for a few days.
It's not something I get to do very often.

—Beau, camp counselor

I love meeting all the people and making new friends!

—Makayla, camper

I love swimming at camp. The lake is really nice!

—William, camper

I love how nice everyone is to each other, and all the
really fun activities we do.

—Melissa, camper

I meet new friends, and we get to do all sorts of
fun activities.

—Gabe, camper

I love getting to meet new people, it's been awesome!

—Madi, camp counselor

I love all the fun activities. I got to go canoeing!

—Brooks, camper

I really like all the games we play—everyone cooperates,
and we're all having fun, even the counselors!

—Mason, camp counselor

I love all the counselors, they are so nice and fun to
hang out with.

—Nava, camper

I love interacting with the campers, and teaching them
new things.

—Asa, camp counselor

As a counselor, I've become influential, and have fun
making things understandable to the little ones at camp.

—Stella, camp counselor

I like that we get to do so many arts and crafts.

—Mila, camper

I love getting to hang out with so many kids that I would
never hang out with otherwise, and meeting new people,
and all the fun that we have.

—Zoe, camp counselor

I like how interactive we are with the kids, and having a
great time!

—Trevor, camp counselor

I love that we get to connect, go swimming and
do fun activities.

—Kiley, camper



2022 4-H SUMMER CAMP REPORT

Respectfully submitted to the
Lewis & Clark County 4-H Council
and County 4-H community

September 2022

Luke Duran

4-H volunteer and summer camp director
ElementL@bresnan.net