

RELEVANCE

Youth Leadership Development

Youth leadership is part of the youth development process and supports the young person in developing: the ability to analyze his or her own strengths and weaknesses, set personal and vocational goals and have the self-esteem, confidence, motivation and abilities to carry them out; and the ability to guide or direct others on a course of action, influence the opinions and behaviors of others and serve as a role model.

TEXAS YOUTH STATISTICS

- **70%** of jobs in Texas will require a postsecondary credential by 2036, According to a report authored by Texas 2036 and the George W. Bush Institute.
- **12.5% of Texas Youth** - Nearly 1 out of every 8 Texas youth are disconnected from school and work.
- **37%** of high school students reported poor mental health.
- **44%** Reported feeling persistent sadness or hopelessness.

Positive Youth Development

Positive youth development helps youth become contributing adults. Youth learn economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social relationships, and community involvement. Positive youth development focuses on building positive attitudes, skills and behaviors. This reduces risky behaviors (Outley, 2018).

RESPONSE

YOUTH LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Youth participants will participate in experiential activities to expand their knowledge and skills in the areas of mental health awareness and financial management. Through lecture, hands-on learning experiences, and interactive games, youth participants will develop the knowledge and skills necessary for positive youth life skills development.

The **Lubbock County Youth and Adult Advisory Board** has identified **the Lubbock County 4-H Youth Life Skills Program** as an educational approach to address the **issue of Positive Youth Leadership Development** in Lubbock County.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- This program was presented for the 6th grade class at Christ the King Diocesan School and youth participants at the South Plains Food Bank – GRUB program.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATORS

- Partners in this effort included: Christ the King Diocesan School, Lubbock County 4-H Youth and Adult Advisory Board, and South Plains Food Bank GRUB program.

VALUE STATEMENT

Mental Health Awareness

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service educates Texans about mental health, suicide prevention, and multi-dimensional wellness. Programs address mental health literacy, stress management skills, and appropriate care strategies to promote overall well-being and reduce stigma. AgriLife programs do not teach participants to diagnose or treat mental health challenges, but instead emphasize the importance of sign and symptom recognition, early intervention, and paths to recovery for chronic and co-occurring conditions. Participants in mental health literacy programs report enhanced understanding and reduced stigma towards youth with mental health concerns. They express greater confidence in identifying and addressing these issues, and a commitment to encouraging students to seek help. Training fosters a non-judgmental attitude and increases empathy, allowing participants to support peers effectively without imposing decisions. Furthermore, they prioritize confidently referring individuals to professional help (Gryglewicz et al., 2018; Min Kyung Kim et al., 2024). Research indicates that mindfulness practices enhance emotional regulation, vital for managing difficult emotions and mitigating mental health issues (Van den Berg et al., 2016). Additionally, resilience training programs, which include mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral techniques, have been shown to improve overall well-being (Murray et al., 2020; Seligman et al., 2009).

RESPONSE

MINDFUL SELF: The Youth Mindful Self Series was presented to the 6th grade class at Christ the King Diocesan School. A total of 10 sessions were conducted with the class. The series included:

- Presentations given on 4 of the 6 lesson series from the Mindful Self Curriculum.
 - Lesson 1
Mindfulness and Wellness Overview
 - Lesson 2
Self-Awareness
 - Lesson 3
Self-Management
 - Lesson 4
Responsible Decision-Making
- Various activities and hands-on learning experiences were presented to the students to allow them the opportunity to practice various techniques for implementing mental health awareness and strategies for dealing with their own circumstances.

DOLLARS and SENSE: The Dollars and Sense program was presented to South Plains Food Bank GRUB youth participants in two sessions covering the following topics:

- 1st Session
 - Needs vs. Wants and Goal-Setting
- 2nd Session
 - Budgeting and the Game of Life
- Youth participants participated various hands-on activities including: setting personal goals utilizing the SMART Goals techniques; identification of needs vs. wants; utilized a budget to determine monthly expenses; and participated in the “Game of Life” to have a first-hand experience of managing a monthly budget.

Evaluation Strategy

For the **Mindful Self Series**, the pre-assessment was completed by 20 students and 22 students completed the post-assessment; a total of 24 youth were reached with the series.

For the **Dollars and Sense Series**, a retrospective post was utilized to measure knowledge gained, skills developed and the adoption of new best practices. A total of 17 of 23 (74 %) GRUB participants completed the retrospective post survey instrument. Participants were also asked to report individual benefits that they had gained as a result of participating in the program.

RESULTS

Youth Life Skills Development – Mindful Self:

Results of the evaluation indicated the following:

- 12 out of 22 (55%) have set a goal of graduating high school or attending college.
- 11 out of 22 (50%) have identified family members as someone to assist them in making better decisions.
- 10 out of 22 (45%) have set goals for themselves.
- 6 out of 22 (27%) have set goals related to personal development such as staying organized, listening better or learning more.
- 6 out of 22 (27%) have set goals related to physical development including increasing sleep, eating healthy and taking care of their body.
- 5 out of 22 (23%) identified God as someone who could assist them in their decision-making.

Youth Life Skills Development – Dollars and Sense:

Results of the evaluation indicated the following:

- 14 out of 17 (82%) plan to use a budget to manage their money.
- 12 out of 17 (71%) learned how to set and achieve financial goals.
- 11 out of 17 (65%) have set financial goals for themselves and include savings in their budget.
- 10 out of 17 (59%) increased their knowledge of creating and using a written budget.
- 9 out of 17 (53%) increased their overall knowledge about money management.
- 8 out of 17 (47%) have made progress towards their goals of saving money.

Summary

Forty-seven youth ages 11 – 18 were provided with valuable “Real Life Skills” through the educational programming efforts.

Future Programming

The Mindful Self Lesson Series will continue to be presented to 6th grade students at Christ the King Diocesan School, as well as being expanded to other school Districts in Lubbock County.

“I learned how to use money
WISELY!!!”
GRUB participant

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