

COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION
SERVICE



EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE *Changing Lives*



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Assistant Chief and Fayette County 4-H agent, along with female officers and a detective, meet with 4-H members each month. The students set the agenda to discuss issues in the news or situations they are addressing in their school or neighborhood.

**When you
support
Extension,
youth interact
with adults
and develop
mentoring
relationship as
an investment
for the future.**

4-H Builds Community Trust and Positive Police Perception through Partnerships with Law Enforcement

Fayette County 4-H developed a partnership with the Lexington Police Department to initiate conversations between female middle school students. Police officers addressed negative stereotypes and discussed alternatives when making difficult choices in life.



If I can spend time mentoring these girls and talking to them about relationships and building them up, then maybe I can keep them from becoming part of one of my cases one day.

*Lexington Police Department
Bureau of Investigations Crimes Against Children*

A Fayette County 4-H Youth Development Agent and the Family Resource Director at Bryan Station Middle School coordinated the Bearcat Diverse Individuals Making Empowering Strides (DIMES) Group. Bryan Station Middle School is highly diverse with 55% minority enrollment. Members of DIMES were nominated to participate in the program by teachers for their leadership potential.

The first DIMES meeting occurred during the 2015 civil unrest. When members were asked to identify topics for the group discussion, dislike of police was identified. The Assistant Chief for the Lexington Police Department was invited to participate. In addition, female officers and a female detective agreed to speak to the 4-H members as an opportunity to change the perception of police created by the media. The 4-H members began to see the detective and officers as people when the officers spoke of their backgrounds, lives and families.

The planned one-time meeting with law enforcement officers developed into a six month mentoring program, meeting once a month. Topics included sexuality, birth control, relationship with friends, families and teachers, and roles of police. The students shared scenarios about bullying, dishonesty, and being disrespected. By talking about their experiences, students were able to gain perspective on their situations. The group built a relationship fostered by trust that allowed them to communicate openly.

Since their initial participation in the program, two students attended 4-H summer camp and returning students look forward to continuing the mentoring program. School counselors praised the group participants for their leadership skills as peer mentors that encouraged



Officer shared, "the 4-H students are honest and passionate about the various aspects of their lives and interactions with their peers."



Initially 4-H members were apprehensive about the program until the Police Detective, Assistant Chief and other female officers shared their backgrounds, personal lives and careers.

other students to consider alternatives to violence. The police officers have replicated the program with three additional mentoring groups in Lexington at other middle schools. The Bearcat Dimes Program was featured in the Fall 2015 issue of *Kentucky Law Enforcement* magazine and was recognized as the Kentucky Extension Advisory Council Individual Diversity Award recipient.