



University-Community-Library Partnership

The University of Maryland Extension Baltimore County 4-H program and Baltimore Public Libraries have partnered together for nine years to foster a successful and flexible afterschool program model. In 2006, an identified program goal for both Baltimore County 4-H and the Baltimore County Public Libraries was to strengthen and sustain community partnerships while offering quality afterschool programs in Baltimore County. There are a number of key strategies that have led to 4-H's successful outreach efforts within the library. These strategies include

- (1) assessment and planning;
- (2) quality youth development training for facilitators;
- (3) participant recruitment;
- (4) quality program delivery;
- (5) sustainable partnerships; and
- (6) evaluation



Throughout the years, we have utilized several program models to adapt to changes in funding, staffing, and youth interest. These models have ranged from a weekly program throughout the school year to a seasonal series of sessions. Programs have included Junk Draw Robotics during Teen Tech Week, workforce readiness, spring break wind energy science experiments, nutrition education, and more. Within each model, it was essential to provide a quality training experience for the intern, librarian or staff person to include best practices in positive youth development and program content.

Training from 4-H is extremely valuable for BCPL, as 4-H staff has the background and experience to provide a quality training to library staff members who are unfamiliar with many youth development concepts. 4-H staff is able to make it easy for library staff to work with youth in a fun and educational program environment. Library staff attend a half-day training and come out equipped to conduct programs. They are provided kits that include materials and instructions for the experiment or project, and the knowledge necessary for facilitating youth programs.

Training staff to provide programs is a much better use of library funds than hiring presenters to come in and do a one-time program. Baltimore County 4-H and Baltimore County Public Library is excited to continue our partnership as we gear up for our next professional development training on Ag Science!



For more information, contact Nia Imani Fields, nfields@umd.edu.