

YA4-H! Youth Advocates for Health: Engaging Youth in Participatory Health Education and Research

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Introduction

- Youth Advocates for Health! (YA4-H!) is an exciting new project that engages participants in Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) projects centered on health concerns that matter to them in their own communities.
- Because the program is still so new, our research was based on a process evaluation of the program based on the following research questions:
 - How successful are county YA4-H! programs in achieving the stated goals (below) of the YA4-H! program for the first year?
 - What are the facilitators and barriers of successful program implementation?
 - Did the use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) contribute to successful implementation of the program?
- County YA4-H! teams will work towards completing the following goals in the first year of the project:
 - Analyze school vending machines and grocery store fruit/vegetable selection through a Statewide Community Assessment.
 - Coordinate a Community Educational program for younger youth related to healthy living.
 - Identify and research a primary health concern in their community and implement a YPAR project based on the information discovered.

Study Design/Methods Used

- An implementation study design, using component analysis, was used for this study. Implementation studies are designed to monitor the development of a new program, focusing on the success of all the elements as it moves "from the drawing board into action." The evaluation of program implementation is increasingly important in this era of tight funding, and subsequent high demand for evidence of program success. Before a program can demonstrate ultimate success, however, it must be implemented according to the program plan and theory. Therefore, implementation analysis is a critical research step in the early stages of a program, such as YA4-H!

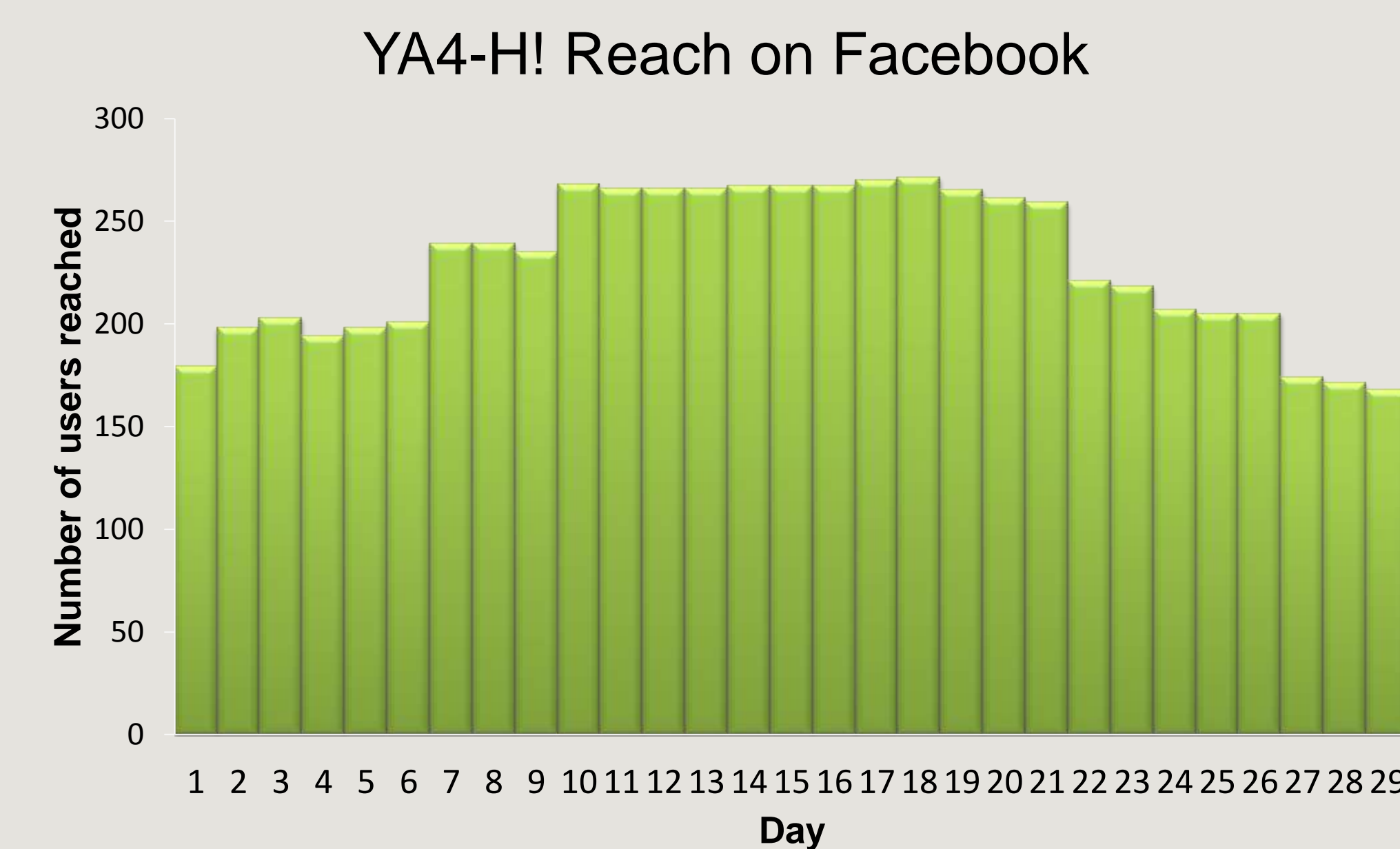
Results

Figure 1. Sherman County YA4-H! Youth in Action!



Amber (Left) and Kianna (Right) interact with a youth (middle) who stopped by their Community Educational Program table at a school event that informed participants of all the ingredients and agricultural components that are necessary to make their favorite kind of pizza!

Figure 2. Facebook Reach Statistics



The benefit of our YA4-H! Facebook page is very significant as you can see above. This graph represents the number of users who have seen anything related to YA4-H! on Facebook in a given 28 day period regardless if they "like" us or not.

Figure 3. YA4-H! County Team Component Analysis

County	Core Team Trained	County Team Developed	Participate in Statewide Project	Conduct Educational Program	Secure Additional Funding	Develop YPAR Project
Benton						
Clatsop						
Columbia						
Coos						
Deschutes						
Grant						
Harney						
Hood River						
Josephine						
Linn						
Malheur						
Marion						
Multnomah						
Polk						
Sherman						
Tillamook						
Union						
Wallowa						
Wasco						
Washington						

Figure 4 represents the progress of each county involved in YA4-H! As you can see, there are some counties that are more involved than others. These results reveal that counties are making progress toward full implementation of the program; a process that could take one to three years to bring the program fully to scale.

Figure 4. Involvement of all Counties in Oregon

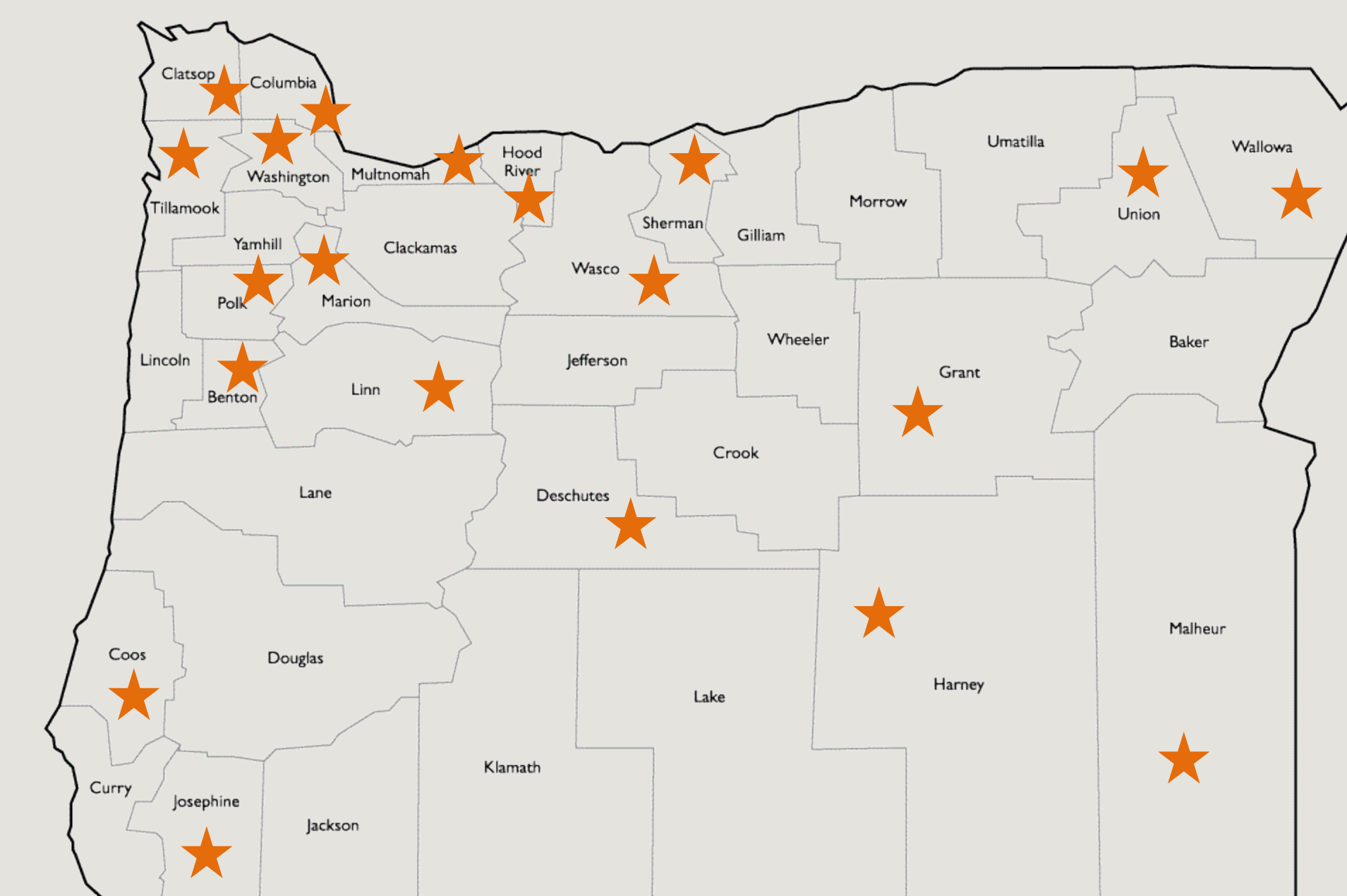


Figure 4 directly correlates with Figure 3 and portrays the involvement of all counties in Oregon by use of a map of the state. Note: Counties without stars within their borders are not participating in the YA4-H! research project.

Summary/Conclusion

- As stated previously, the YA4-H! project is still very young, with another two years expected before full implementation of the program is realized. The results of this implementation study reveal modest and positive program implementation, with clear signs that the program is progressing as planned.
- Implementation will be continued to be monitored over time to ensure continued program success. In addition, more core team trainings will be conducted in the fall of 2012 to bolster ongoing YA4-H! programs.
- Despite the initial success of YA4-H!, there is much to be completed. Currently, none of the county teams have completed the last two steps of the component analysis highlighted in Figure 3. These tasks are part of the first-year goals of the project. With continued experience and utilization of the resources available, such as social media outlets, we are hopeful the YA4-H! teams and the project as a whole will accomplish the overall goal of involving youth in participatory research in their local communities.

References

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