

# impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



*Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities*

## **JOLT: Journey of Opportunities for Leaders of Tomorrow**

### **Issue**

Modern society is filled with negative attitudes toward teenagers and views most teenagers as problematic at best. Programs like JOLT help turn teens into positive role models and future community leaders.

### **What has been done?**

JOLT (Journey of Opportunities for Leaders of Tomorrow) is an Arizona Teen Leadership camp held annually each June near Heber, Arizona. Activities promote trust-building, leadership, and communication skills. Arizona Cooperative Extension and the Arizona 4-H Youth Development Foundation sponsor the camp, which has been held for 15 years. Teenagers aged 14-18, of various backgrounds, gather from across Arizona to develop open-minded and positive attitudes, develop a strong sense of teamwork, and learn to reject selfish actions that only benefit individuals. Conflict resolution skills and relationship building skills help create the sense of the "JOLT community" that is uncommon in other camps. Empowered participants enhance their interpersonal skills and strengthen their communication abilities, which helps promote long-lasting and true friendships. For the past two years, 12 teens and staff from New Mexico have attended JOLT.

### **Impact**

More than 1,300 teens have attended JOLT over the past 15 years. Teens who were youth staff members have gone on to serve as state 4-H Ambassadors and state 4-H Teen Council officers and representatives, and about 31 percent of the participants report they have participated in school government and community leadership opportunities after attending the camp. Participants at "Once in a Lifetime: JOLT 2002" reported increasing their leadership skills and abilities by 21 percent; ability to trust others by 26 percent, and ability to logically solve problems in a group by 20 percent. More than 50 percent of the 2002 campers had attended JOLT the previous year(s). Prior JOLT successes were evident in the participant survey; the starting average reference point was higher for returning participants for each question.

The 2002 camp was unique, as participants not only learned of leadership theory, but had the opportunity to demonstrate it in a real-life situation. The Rodeo-Chediski fire that burned nearly 500,000 acres in Arizona forced the evacuation of all 115 campers in less than 30 minutes. The ability to act and think quickly, listen and follow directions, stay calm and leave behind treasured belongings helped the group understand what it means to be part of a larger community.

"JOLT 2002 meant making new friends, learning to trust people you don't even know at first, and just having a great learning experience." – JOLT participant

Because camp was evacuated a day early due to the Rodeo-Chediski Fire, it was great that we all pulled together and helped each other out no matter if you lived 3 miles away or 1,000."

–JOLT participant

"JOLT means everything to me. I learn friendship, teamwork and how to trust people. I love JOLT. It makes me a better person to know that there are truly people who try to make other people feel like they're important." – 3rd-year JOLT participant

We are thankful that our 18-year-old son is so focused on this leadership opportunity and not troubled like others we see and hear of. We feel blessed that we have JOLT and 4-H in our kids' lives." Mother of a 2003 youth staff member

"The greatest satisfaction is seeing teens serve on staff and watch them grow by developing leadership skills through planning and implementing programs for their peers. Most youth staff begin with limited understanding and skills and by the time camp is over they are confident and competent leaders." – JOLT advisor

### **Funding**

Arizona Cooperative Extension, 4-H Youth Development

### **Contact**

Michael Hauser, 4-H Youth Development/ANR  
Apache County Cooperative Extension  
PO Box 369  
St. Johns, AZ 85936-0369  
Tel: (928) 337-2267; FAX: (928) 337-3376  
mhauser@ag.arizona.edu