International Agreement Establishes 4-H Youth Development Program Guanajuato Mexico

Marilyn Corbin and Christy Bartley, Pennsylvania State University, USA
Manuel Collado, University of Guanajuato, Mexico

Introduction  Through a new international partnership with The Pennsylvania State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Penn State Cooperative Extension with the University of Guanajuato, Institute of Agriculture, a far-reaching youth development program is being developed in Mexico. By building on the strength and interest in agriculture, and the need for a more educated workforce, 4-H is being framed to foster a healthier lifestyle and help increase the quality of life for families and youth in Guanajuato.

Method  With a new cooperative agreement in hand, both colleges are launching new initiatives in agriculture and youth development. 4-H will be established in approximately five communities reaching approximately 1000 youth in the first two years. With the support of university faculty, elected officials including municipal leaders, K-12 educators, and volunteer leaders, 4-H has found a warm welcome in Guanajuato. An orientation has been provided to a team of elected officials, teachers, and volunteers.

Major Points or Information to be Shared  The following points will be discussed:
- 4-H is a valued institution that other countries are eager to establish.
- 4-H can be developed through international university partnerships.
- The 4-H values, democratic principles, and essential components of positive youth development are very worthy core elements to replicate.

Conclusions or Lessons Learned  The 4-H youth development program has a strong reputation around the world, and many people in other countries want their youth to benefit from 4-H. Recently, there has been increased interest in helping spread the benefits of 4-H to more youth. Teaching methods including experiential learning help create a positive climate for learning for all ages. A genuine interest and enthusiasm among all involved creates an even greater motivation to extend informal youth education to more youth.

Educational Importance  The establishment of the 4-H Youth Development program in Guanajuato is a huge step in believing in the future of our youth. Because 4-H has an excellent reputation in building self-esteem, leadership, citizenship, life skills, responsibility and the principles of integrity and ethical behavior in youth, the 4-H program is being seen as a very important component of a youth’s education in Mexico. Through this initiative, 4-H youth development will become firmly established in schools and in communities where youth will learn and grow in 4-H Clubs.