Innovation Online Noncredit Teaching Award

"Connecting for Youth" WRLF 2015 Inaugural e-Sessions

Marilyn K. Lesmeister and Lyla Houglum

Tasked with organizing the 2015 4-H Western Region Leaders’ Forum, co-chairs Marilyn Lesmeister and Lyla Houglum decided to take a risk, and try something radically different. They took a hard look at our digital world, and developed their “Connecting for Youth” training forum as an innovative online webinar series. Hosted by the OSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Program, co-chairs Marilyn and Lyla provided the creativity, vision, leadership--and everything in between--to make this innovative program and its delivery a commanding success. The resulting numbers alone were impressive. This first-time-ever online series reached an audience almost three times the size of traditional face-to-face conferences. Over 200 sites registered to host e-Sessions. Every state, province, and territory in the western region participated, with 36 sites in Oregon, 30 in Washington, 27 in Colorado, and 19 in New Mexico. It also established new partnerships; broadened the scope of research, and expanded learning for 4-H volunteers in the West. For example, these e-Sessions spawned a partnership with the Kids Included Together program, and developed new collaborations right here in our own backyard within OSU’s College of Public Health and Human Sciences.

Marilyn and Lyla have created a “new normal,” integrating western region university units and their state cultures in a radical new way. So it should come as no surprise that the OSU Extension 4-H Youth Development Program is being recognized in the western region for leadership in bringing quality, effective education to many new 4-H volunteers.

Please join me in congratulating Marilyn Lesmeister and Lyla Houglum for their hard work creating the first-ever "Connecting for Youth" online webinar series, this year’s winner of the Innovation in Online Noncredit Teaching Award.