
Title: Zoom into Science: Offering 4-H Youth Connections to Science Content during COVID-19

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Summary: The Georgia 4-H Zoom into Science virtual science series offers 4-H youth to the opportunity to connect with professionals in various natural science industries.

Situation: An integrated, cross-discipline approach to science education began in the 1990s with the National Science Foundation. Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) literacy “includes the conceptual understandings and procedural skills and abilities for individuals to address STEM-related personal, social, and global issues,” (Byhee, 2014). With economic competition truly becoming global and STEM-related careers continue to grow and expand, there is a need for young people to develop interest and skills in these areas, (Caprile, Palmen, Sanz, & Dente, 2015). Exposing young people to engaging STEM-related opportunities at younger ages teach valuable content and potentially increase youth interest and influence their career choices.

Response: Extension programming during the COVID-19 pandemic provides the opportunity for innovative and non-traditional delivery methods. As a response to provide educational STEM opportunities to youth during this time, the Georgia 4-H Zoom into Science webinar series allows youth to directly engage with natural science experts in their respective fields using a virtual platform. Not only do participants learn science content, but they are also exposed to a variety of STEM-related careers. Each one-hour session focuses on a particular science concept. Presenters share their real-world experiences often through photos and videos and allow youth to ask questions. Some presenters even featured live animals. All sessions are offered at no cost to families.

Results/Impacts: To date, the Georgia 4-H Zoom into Science webinar series has offered ten sessions engaging 743 families in real-time throughout the United States and Canada. Though the program was intended for Georgia 4-H families, successful social media promotion has quickly engaged 4-H youth at a larger geographic scale. Session topics have included astronomy, weather, animal prosthesis, paleontology, water, plant genetics, and sea turtles. Due to the programming being delivered virtually, presenters residing in Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Texas, and Wisconsin connected with the attendees. At the end of a session, an anonymous participant commented to a presenter, “thank you so much! I learned so much and want to be like you one day.” After the sea turtles session, a parent shared an e-mail stating, “Thank you so much for giving everyone the opportunity to participate in the Sea Turtle zoom! My homeschooler (4th grade) absolutely loved it!! He was on my phone taking photos of the babies to show his dad when he comes home. I appreciated the educating hour we had with ya’ll!!” A Georgia 4-H Agent commented, “Thank you SO MUCH for organizing the Zoom into Science sessions and for creating marketing graphics! The graphics are so easy to add to our newsletters and social media. And it is so nice to have programs to offer our 4-Hers during months like these

when I'm scrambling just trying to figure out what to do next. It gives me a little breathing room to regroup and plan our next local event. So thanks for your time and energy to organize these – we are definitely promoting them!" A 4-H professional from New York shared "Thank you so much for doing these! We loved the last session and are really looking forward to the next session. I do hope maybe even after this pandemic you may consider continuing these sessions? Very awesome! Thanks again for all your work on this." Because of the short-term successes over the summer, plans to continue the series throughout the 2020-21 school year were quickly formed. Additionally, a channel was created on Kaltura where the recorded sessions could be posted for asynchronous viewing.