



Colorado State University
Extension



CSUE 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Program Success Story

Erin Sullivan, a CSU Extension 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Program member serving Denver County, is leading a weekly STEM Club at Place Bridge Academy where 17 youth were enrolled for a six week period. Place Bridge Academy, with 40 different countries represented and over 60 different languages spoken, is a unique learning environment that serves international refugee students and is a draw to other Colorado youth as well.

Many at the academy are familiar with 4-H but the CSUE 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Program allows Erin to connect with youth long-term and to expose them to many different STEM-related topics like rocketry and engineering. Youth enrolled in Erin's program re-enroll to complete long-term projects for show at the academy and the Denver County Fair.

A TYPICAL DAY

A typical Monday for Erin begins by ensuring that she has all supplies and curriculum ready for the week. She believes that one of the greatest methods of teaching is 'learning by doing.' Erin's STEM program provides youth an opportunity to get their hands dirty by brainstorming, trying out their designs, and redesigning when needed. Each week, youth built new styles of rockets and learned different methods of launching them. At the end of the program, they had a greater understanding of some of the engineering principles NASA employs when sending people to the moon.

In their third week of the program, youth were given materials and asked to design a rocket using knowledge gained the previous week. One student, convinced his rocket wouldn't launch because it looked different than everyone else's, cut out the letter "F" (for failure) and hung it from his

rocket like a flag. When it was his turn to launch, he shared why he thought it wouldn't fly. His classmates cheered him on by reminding him that although he may have discovered another way that didn't work, he did not fail. His rocket did launch successfully and he left the program with a massive smile on his face that day.

OUTCOMES

Erin's service in the AmeriCorps program has provided her the opportunity to build the capacity of already existing programs. One of her duties has been to strengthen Denver County Extension's volunteer management system by recruiting, training, and coordinating volunteers to help with the STEM Clubs they've created in the schools. Erin orients, coordinates, onboards, and manages volunteers by responding to their inquiries at the beginning of each week, ensuring their curriculum is on task and that supplies are ready and on hand, and that icebreakers and games are available to develop and build a rapport with youth. These volunteers, in turn, are broadening our reach by providing CSUE 4-H STEM AmeriCorps programming at three different sites in Denver County.

Erin has also developed three new partnerships with local community organizations looking for youth enrichment providers and has taken the lead to ensure these programs succeed.

NEXT STEPS

Erin is presently working towards her master's degree in communication and is looking forward to a career where she can help others achieve personal and professional growth. She also loves traveling, hiking, and exploring our beautiful state.

Erin Sullivan
Denver County



*"I love
developing myself
and others."*

-Erin
CSUE 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Member



*"The most awesome thing that
happened today was that
girls took a leadership role
in the class."*

-Volunteer
CSUE 4-H STEM AmeriCorps Program