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Wonderwise 4-H: Following in the Footsteps of Women Scientists

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Wonderwise 4-H: Following in the Footsteps of Women Scientists

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Abstract
Wonderwise 4-H: Women in Science introduces youth to contemporary female scientists in their labs, out in the field, and with their families through nine interactive multimedia kits. Youth learn about the scientist’s occupation and participate in hands-on science activities similar to the actual work of a female scientist role model. Using role models was effective in improving youths’ attitudes about science through engaging activities and realistic videos. A web survey of 150 adult youth leaders showed Wonderwise 4-H brings “real science” into youths’ lives by (a) engaging them in actual scientific activities, (b) increasing their understanding of what science is, and (c) broadening their view of who scientists are, what they do, and where they work. It encourages youth to pursue science in their future by (a) helping them become more confident and capable at scientific endeavors, (b) increasing their understanding of the possibilities of a science career, and (c) connecting them in a personal way with scientist role models. Wonderwise 4-H is a model for how museums and 4-H can work together to improve nonformal science education; 4-H took advantage of a unique opportunity, and the museum reached beyond its usual constituents. Project dissemination was primarily through existing 4-H networks in partner states. The success of this project suggests that opportunities for science learning can be enhanced through innovative collaborations of nonformal educational partners.