Animal Ambassadors Program Funded to Develop Model for Science Curriculum Outreach

Animal Ambassadors, a new K–8 educational program, has received a major grant from the American Honda Foundation to develop a state and national curriculum training model in collaboration with the 4-H program of San Luis Obispo County.

The $50,000 grant will support implementation and dissemination of the Animal Ambassadors curriculum, an innovative youth science education outreach program being developed by Veterinary Medicine Extension in conjunction with county 4-H programs and the 4-H After School Activity Program in Los Angeles.

As Animal Ambassadors delves into the world of animals to help children and youth develop an interest in science, it emphasizes important critical thinking and life skills. The program fosters a caring and responsible attitude toward animals, oneself, and other humans.

Dan Desmond, state 4-H coordinator, says “4-H has a long tradition of animal science programs that foster experience-based education while developing a variety of life skills. Animal Ambassadors will allow us to enrich that tradition and also reach a whole new generation of youth who have not yet had such opportunities.”

“The Animal Ambassadors program, which attracts people of all ages, highlights veterinary medicine and other animal-related fields.”

Animal Ambassadors comprises three age-specific curricula designed for primary (ages 5–8), junior (ages 9–11) and intermediate (ages 12–14) audiences. Activities involve hands-on, inquiry-based learning about domestic and wild animals. The interactive curricular “learning kits” include materials such as foot and tooth molds. Follow-up activities promote family involvement and introduce animal-related careers.

Donald Klingborg, director of Veterinary Medicine Extension, says, “The Animal Ambassadors program, which attracts people of all ages, highlights veterinary medicine and other animal-related fields.”

Upon successful completion of the project, Animal Ambassadors will be available to communities throughout California through the 4-H Youth Development Program and organizations such as the California Veterinary Medical Association.

For more information about Animal Ambassadors, program director Martin Smith may be reached at (530) 752-6894 or mhsmith@ucdavis.edu.

Students at the Utah Elementary School in East Los Angeles work on “Making Tracks,” an activity in which students dip foot molds into tempera paint to create animal track art, then correlate the tracks with a habitat poster map (see also: photo above, left). Students at the Valley Oak Child Development Center in Davis in an exercise that includes measuring hooves of various types and sizes.