

## iPads help 4-H agents reach children

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By Allison Hedrick



Bobby Griffith, teen leader of the Henry County 4-H group, plays a virtual drum on an iPad using the GarageBand app.

Feb. 18, 2013 – It's hard to compete for a child's attention these days when television shows, computer programs, and video games tend to be favorite pastimes.

So Virginia Cooperative Extension agents decided that if you can't beat them, you might as well join them. They are using iPads to enhance educational programming and keep children engaged.

Last summer, Extension created an iPad lab that includes 12 iPads that agents can use in educational programs.

"Virginia 4-H emphasizes learning by doing and using the iPad puts a modern spin on that," said Cathy Sutphin, associate director of 4-H youth development for Extension. Mark Sumner, senior information technology analyst, and Melissa Breen, 4-H administrative assistant, helped to develop the iPad labs.

"When they say, 'There's an app for that,' they really mean it," Sutphin said. "Agents can use the iPads to go in so many different directions."

Ruth Wallace, 4-H agent in Buckingham County, said the iPads are good learning tools to keep children interested.

"On the first day when I mentioned that we would be using the iPads, the kids' eyes just lit up," Wallace said. "All of a sudden I had their complete attention."

Her 4-H group has been using iPads in an after-school program called "Mad Science." Wallace said the students use the iPads to record their progress on science experiments, and they plan to turn their efforts into a video. They also use an iPad application called Tinkerbox to explore physics.

For Wallace, the technology allows her students to learn virtually in addition to the hands-on approach she uses.

"The iPads have helped us add another dimension to what we are doing," she said.

A 4-H group in Henry County used the iPads to explore and create music through the GarageBand app.

"Many youths are engaged in music and are musically inclined but can't afford all of the instruments. By having GarageBand, you have them all at once," said Brian Hairston, Henry County 4-H youth agent. "It lets you do things you could never do on a real instrument."

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