



UI Extension Trends 2005:

Family and Community

Eating Smarter in Idaho: Hands-On UI Extension Program a ‘Seniors’ Success

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man a couple of ways to cook a fish, and how to calculate the fat grams in a fish, and he can eat healthfully for a lifetime. That is the philosophy reflected in the Senior Extension Nutrition Program (SENP) and in Extension Diabetes Education in Idaho.

“The (SENP) program was offered to me because I have heart disease,” said Jim Huber, a 65-year-old Post Falls retiree and recent program graduate. “Pam (Dlouhy) came once every two weeks with some nutritional foods we cooked up. We went shopping, and I learned to read the nutrition labels, how to understand them, what milligrams of salt, fat, and cholesterol I can have.”

SENP was designed by UI Extension Educator Shelly Johnson. She and UI Extension Nutrition Program Coordinator Kali Gardiner hire and train SENP nutritional advisers for northern Idaho. A 2003 Coeur d’Alene-based Aging and Adult Services (AAS) survey showed that nearly half its clients—349 seniors in the five Panhandle counties—were at high nutritional risk.

“We work with seniors one-on-one,” says Dlouhy, UI Extension nutrition adviser. “Our focus is eating healthfully and simply. I just customize my sessions with them to meet their needs. I think the program has incredible value. I see the impact.”

Eat Better—Live Healthier

In 2004, 540 Idaho citizens received diabetes education through two UI Extension programs, based on the Healthy Diabetes Plate method. The simple method of choosing the right proportion of foods was introduced in Idaho by UI Extension Educator Martha Raidl; extension programs on diabetes offered in northern Idaho are directed and taught by Johnson.

The *Idaho Plate Method* eliminates the need to measure and weigh portions: One quarter of a nine-inch plate is devoted to meat, fish, or other protein; one quarter to starch, and the other half to non-starch vegetables. An additional serving of fruit and an 8-ounce glass of milk delivers a meal built

on the food guide pyramid blueprint. Diabetes program participants learn the *Idaho Plate Method*, and take a grocery shopping field trip, where they learn to effectively read nutrition labels.

Research indicates that diabetes education can reduce health complications from diabetes, as well as the cost of the disease.

The hands-on methods of these extension nutrition programs seem to be effective teaching and learning tools (pre- and post-tests show significant changes in eating habits), leading participants to greater understanding of how to manage their health. The programs’ success can be measured anecdotally as well as statistically. “I think this is a great program,” said Huber. “I really feel good.”

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UI Extension Educator Shelly Johnson reviews product labels during a SENP field trip.

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Hey Mom: ‘What’s for Dinner?’

It’s an American phenomenon—when adults embark on their morning commute to work, approximately three-quarters have no idea what they will have for dinner. One in two Americans will spend less than an hour preparing a weekday meal, and the average cook wants to limit time in the kitchen to 20 or 30 minutes.

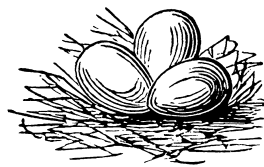
Meal planning is becoming a lost art, and nutritional meals are even more rare. *Meal Time in Less Time*, developed by University of Idaho Extension, strives to take some of the spontaneity out of meal planning and substitute nutritional meals for the more common frozen dinners or fast food.

When UI Extension educators went shopping for a curriculum that could help busy adults better plan nutritious meals, they found an empty cupboard, so they developed their own. Marnie Spencer (Blackfoot), Rhea Lanting (Twin Falls), and Laura Sant (Malad) created a three-part series designed to help adults plan a menu, shop for the most economical ingredients, and learn to prepare meals in less time.

The one-hour sessions encourage traditional meal preparers to invoke the help of other family members; to try less labor-intensive cooking methods, such as crock pots, slow cookers, or pressure cookers; and to prepare some parts of the menu in advance, explains Sant. “Instead of doing everything from scratch, we suggest using mixes or pre-prepared foods so a portion of the meals are pre-made.”

She is reluctant to offer specific menus as part of *Meal Time in Less Time*. She would rather see individuals develop their own ideas about where to find recipes on healthy foods. She also offers tips on how to shop economically and how to read food labels to ensure the best nutritional value.

• Contact Spencer at 785-8060 or marniers@uidaho.edu, Lanting at 734-9590 or rhlanting@uidaho.edu, and Sant at 862-1097 or lsant@uidaho.edu



Thieves Are Everywhere: Protect Your Identity

Identity theft can be as simple as someone stealing the contents of a mailbox with the red flag up, or as high-tech as using a cell phone camera to take a picture of a harried traveler’s credit card at an airport check-in counter.

“Thieves are only limited by their imaginations,” said Julia Welch, a UI Extension educator in Idaho County who developed a program to help rural Idaho residents protect themselves against identity theft.

Welch and Marsha Hawkins-Lockard, UI Extension educator in Owyhee County, began working in 2004 on programs to help individuals shield themselves from unscrupulous thieves who steal personal information. They first developed educational programs independently and later decided to pool their expertise to create a high-demand class, “Guarding Against Identity Theft.”

A middle-aged professional, a stay-at-home mother, a 10-year-old fourth-grader, and a retired senior citizen. All are potential victims of

...programs to help individuals shield themselves from unscrupulous thieves...

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Over-flow audiences for Julia Welch’s “Guarding Against Identity Theft” classes were attentive to the information presented.

New Dietary Guidelines Promoted

New dietary guidelines literally are reshaping the way Americans look at nutrition. The familiar food pyramid is being transfigured, based on current scientific knowledge about how dietary intake may reduce the risk of major chronic diseases.

The new guidelines issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health and Human Services are more strict than the old pyramid. The emphasis, explains University of Idaho Extension Educator Laura Sant is:

1. People should choose foods high in vitamins and nutrients and low in calories and sugar—“nutrient dense”

foods such as fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy and whole grains; and

2. People should limit their intake of high-fat and sugar foods to about 267 calories, based on daily consumption of 2,000 calories.

The new standards are “significantly different,” with vastly expanded suggestions. It is the first major revision of the nutrition guide since 2000. The guidelines have 10 recommendations grouped within three major headings, called the ABCs of good health: aim for fitness, build a healthy base, and choose sensibly.

UI Extension programs are having a positive impact on changing knowledge about nutritious diets. Participants in a 2004 project significantly improved their knowledge after recent classes.

- Contact Sant at 862-1097 or lsant@uidaho.edu

Thieves Are Everywhere *continued from page 2*

identity theft, which is the fastest-growing crime in America, say Welch and Hawkins-Lockard. Seniors, especially, can be vulnerable to such theft, because they typically are more trusting.

Welch delivered seven workshops in 2004, to audiences of homemakers, federal retired workers, UI Extension nutrition program participants, and attendees of the Governor’s Conference on Aging. Designed for 90 minutes, the classes often grew to two hours or more as participants shared horror stories about private information being pirated for illegal gain.

Welch said she got a telephone call recently from an Idaho woman who appears to have been a victim of identity theft. The woman said she was informed by an auto company loan department that someone had used her personal information to buy a high-end SUV in Brazil. Welch said she also is aware of a case in Idaho in which someone obtained pain medication from a hospital pharmacy using the name of a three-week-old baby, and then skipped town.

Welch and Hawkins-Lockard encourage people to use common sense when responding to inquiries about personal information. “I think it’s getting harder to keep personal information secure,” Welch explains.

Contact Welch at 983-2667 or jwelch@uidaho.edu and Hawkins-Lockard at 896-4104 or mlockard@uidaho.edu

Identity Theft Safeguards

To guard against identity theft, individuals should:

- Obtain a free credit report from the three national reporting agencies every year (reports can be requested online at www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling toll-free 877-322-8228).
- Never provide your Social Security number to unknown inquirers.
- Change passwords and personal identification numbers frequently and do not use commonly known or predictable numbers or phrases.
- Have photos included on credit cards, if possible.
- Keep all receipts, and check bank and credit card statements as soon as they are received.
- Shred documents before discarding them.
- Watch for suspicious people who might try to intercept account information at check-out stands or automatic teller machines.

Food Handling Classes Target High School Workers

Fast food restaurants almost have become a second home for teenagers. If adolescents aren’t in front of the counter, ordering from a menu of hamburgers, fries, and soft drinks, they’re laboring on the other side of the counter preparing meals. In fact, nearly three-fourths of working high school students indicate their first job was at a fast food restaurant.

Yet, relatively few receive training in the safe handling of food. A University of Idaho Extension program, “Ready, Set, Food Safe” was created to fill the educational void. Laura Sant, a UI Extension educator in Franklin and Oneida counties, said the primary objective is to prevent the spread of bacteria from one source to another and improve food safety behind the counter and in the kitchen.

Yet, relatively few receive training in the safe handling of food.

A lot of food workers tend to be high school students, so we think it’s important to give them food safety classes. The goal ultimately is for them to pass the Idaho Food Handlers Permit test from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Idaho’s Unicode prescribes the specific knowledge food handlers should have when serving the public.

Sandra McCurdy, UI Extension food safety specialist, developed the curriculum, targeting the developmental stages of adolescents. Sant began teaching Ready, Set, Food Safety in Malad in 2001. She has taught more than a half-dozen classes at the request of high school FCS teachers at Westside (Dayton), North Gem (Bancroft), and Preston high schools. Farther west, UI Extension Educator Joey Peutz offers the classes in Canyon County.

Nearly 300 high school students have taken Ready, Set, Food Safe. Testing indicates food safety knowledge improved from pre-test scores of 74 percent to an average post-test score of 91.

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Extension Touches One-Quarter of Idaho’s Population

UI Extension faculty reported the following face-to-face contacts for 2004:

	Native Amer.	Asian	Black	Caucas.	Hispan.	Female	Male	Youth	Adults	Total contacts
Totals:	4,508	3,397	2,836	377,583	36,359	228,177	196,506	180,310	244,373	424,683
Percent:	1.06	0.80	0.67	88.91	8.56	53.73	46.27	42.46	57.54	100.00

“We do not know how many are unique vs. those who are repeat customers,” according to Paul McCawley, UI Extension associate director. “Our survey—‘Your Idaho Community: current and future needs’—conducted in April-May 2004, indicates that we reach about 24 percent of the population annually, but it does not tell us whether the contacts are in-person, telephone, or other contacts.”

TechHelp Energizes Businesses

The same fuel driving the resurgent U.S. economy also is energizing Idaho's economy: small- to medium-sized businesses, entrepreneurial enterprises with fewer than 500 employees, and annual sales of less than \$200 million.

"Historically, it's the mid-size companies that sustain and drive the economies," explains Jeff Kronenberg, a University of Idaho Extension food science specialist working for Idaho's TechHelp consortium.

"Small- and medium-sized companies tend to be more flexible and are better able to react to market conditions. They can go to market with new products more quickly."

Through TechHelp, Kronenberg has helped dozens of Idaho companies become more efficient, competitive, and responsive to industry demands. Services were delivered on-site to Idaho businesses whose products range from dairy and frozen/refrigerated potato products to beef, fresh-cut produce, and onion and potato packers. He also provides public workshops throughout the year in such issues as food security.

Programs presented by TechHelp the past decade have had profound impacts on Idaho businesses and the economy. For example, a potato packing operation in eastern Idaho increased sales by \$500,000 and retained sales of \$250,000 because of TechHelp assistance. It saved \$80,000, and retained and added employees.

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Creating a System of Leaders

There are plenty of potential leaders in every town in Idaho. The challenge, for small town survival and economic well-being, is getting leaders to pull together toward a common vision. University of Idaho rural sociologist Lorie Higgins helped institute a program that identifies and trains them.

Working with a \$350,000 grant from the Minnesota-based Northwest Area Foundation, Higgins co-directs the Foundation's Horizons Program in Idaho with Priscilla Salant. The pilot program is in place in Kamiah, Orofino, and Elk River.

"A big part of the program is expanding the leadership system," Higgins said.

Ken Cohen, a UI graduate student, is working with the three towns as a coach to help them develop and complete the community projects they've envisioned. Salant is working with the UI to help improve its capacity to conduct outreach in the areas of rural economic and community development.

Last January, about 300 people in the three towns attended Horizons-sponsored community development workshops with David Beurle, a former adviser to the Australian minister of agriculture. As a result of the meetings, the communities came up with visions and goals to make their towns more viable.

Orofino, for example, wants to be known as "The Steelhead Capitol of the World," and has started a campaign to make sure that happens. Elk River, meanwhile, plans to build an information kiosk at Elk River Falls that will tell visitors about other attractions in the area, "so they don't simply view the falls then turn around and go back to Moscow or some other place," Higgins said.

Addressing Two Kinds of Poverty

"The program has created opportunities for community conversations that have needed to happen for a long time," Higgins said.

The basis of the Horizons Program, now operating in eight western and midwestern states, is to help reduce poverty. While there is real financial poverty in the communities the program serves, there also often is another kind of poverty, a poverty of spirit, Higgins said, "It can make people think there's nothing they can do and that there is no point in trying." Even among those who do volunteer in their communities, many often end up "burning out" because they carry too much of a load, and no one seems to step forward to help them, Higgins said.

The Horizons Program creates a system of leaders so that one or two people don't have to be the only community and economic development cheerleaders in their towns.

The program is now focused on the three individual communities' goals and ideas, but cooperation among the communities likely will happen, Higgins said.

Higgins said the question for the towns is: "How do we create the community we want to be?"

The Horizons Program is based on a framework of "anchors" and "values" that have the overall purpose of reducing poverty, which is the Northwest Area Foundation's first priority.

• Contact Higgins at 885-9717 or higgins@uidaho.edu and Cohen at 885-7444 or kcohen@uidaho.edu



The Horizons Program drew together participants from rural Idaho places who worked on local issues of concern.

After-School Programs Continue After Funding Ends

A University of Idaho Extension-assisted project to help create after-school programs in several Idaho County communities has proven to be a bigger success than imagined.

As part of the Centers for Discovery program, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, after-school programs were established in Cottonwood, Elk City, Grangeville, Kamiah, Kooskia, and Riggins.

The three-year grant money has been used up, but because the communities considered how to make the programs sustainable from the start, the programs appear to have good chances of continuing, said Mary Schmidt, UI Extension educator in Idaho County who worked with community groups to establish the programs.

“From the very beginning, sustainability was a vital component,” Schmidt said. “They were thinking sustainability from the time the doors opened for the first time.” To assure the programs’ sustainability, community groups that designed them considered things like user fees, business support, additional grant funding, and other revenue-generating ideas.

Built Around a Clubhouse Concept

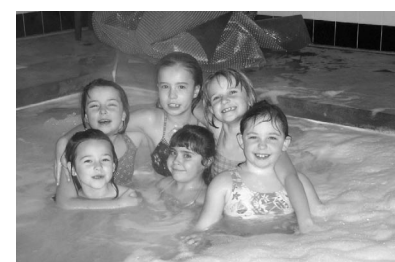
Some of the programs are more involved than others, but all are built around a clubhouse concept, Schmidt said. The “clubhouses” have things like kitchen facilities, computers, bean bag chairs, and other amenities that ensure the space is unique and separate from the rest of the school.

One of the biggest benefits of the programs is that they allow students from small towns and rural areas to see and do things they might otherwise not have the opportunity to do, Schmidt said. That could be anything from using the Internet, taking art or swimming lessons, or seeing a musical theater production in Spokane.

While activities vary from site to site, all have a strong educational component, Schmidt said. “Academic enrichment is important to these programs. They are exposing (students) to new things and raising their aspirations.”

“It’s really exciting for our rural areas,” Schmidt said. “You can see the effect it’s had on these kids and the effect it’s had on the communities.”

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The Kids Klub after-school program in Grangeville will continue, thanks to support from community groups.

Cross-Cultural Acceptance Stressed

Imagine yourself in a foreign environment, unable to speak the native language, and unable to understand the local customs. Interaction is required; miscommunication is inevitable.

As Idaho becomes more ethnically diverse, the need for breaking down traditional cultural barriers has never been more important. Studies indicate Hispanics now comprise more than 9 percent of Idaho’s population. The state’s history also is a product of interactions of Native Americans, African-Americans, Asians, and Caucasians.

The University of Idaho Extension program has embarked on a journey—Idaho’s Journey for Diversity and Human Rights—to topple cultural hurdles and to encourage understanding and positive interaction. UI Extension received two grants to identify a program that will foster cross-cultural acceptance.

BaFa BaFa—A Game Promotes Understanding

In 2003, extension formed the Civil Society Topic Team to identify programs to foster cross-cultural acceptance. Using a UI Critical Issues Grant and an Idaho Humanities Council award,

the team focused on two experiential programs. UI Extension Educator Brian Luckey, Canyon County, initiated an interactive game, BaFa BaFa, to help high school students and young adults understand the difficulty of adapting to a new culture.

Participants form two groups—Alphas and Betas. One group is the native culture; the other, foreign interlopers. Both groups try to adapt to new cultural values and customs without any rules in advance and no means of verbal communication.

“One of the keys is to have a debriefing at the end of the session,” Luckey says. That’s where we believe the real learning takes place—sharing the experience with the rest of the group.”

Conclusions reached through BaFa BaFa are highly personal. Luckey doesn’t expect people to have the same learning or understanding. It is important that participants realize there are many ways of doing the same task, and that negative characteristics usually are attached to the way others perform the task.

“I think this has a big impact on participants... This game can really shake up the way you look at other cultures.”

- Contact Luckey at 459-6003 or bluckey@uidaho.edu

County's Libraries Get Help

A UI Extension study in Valley County to gauge the feasibility of creating a library district showed that most residents both supported the idea and were willing to tax themselves to pay for it.

Steve Hines, former UI Extension educator in Valley County now in Lincoln County, worked with the UI's Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department to develop the telephone survey, conducted by local volunteers. Usable responses came from 320 residents.

Funded with an Idaho State Library grant, meetings were held with library officials in November 2003. The final report was issued in May 2004.

"They wanted to know if they even had a chance (of passing a tax measure)," Hines said.

The study found much support for a library district. About 60 percent of those surveyed said they would vote "yes" on a ballot measure to create a library district.

The idea for the library district, which the county has decided to place on the ballot this fall, is to improve and expand services to existing libraries in McCall and Cascade and start a library in Donnelly.

Survey results indicate residents are thinking about the future needs of the county. "Growth in the county is just exploding," Hines said.

The county does not want to place the issue on a ballot in 2005 without knowing the attitudes of voters.

• Contact Hines at 886-2406 or shines@uidaho.edu

Married and Still Loving It!

Most marketing experts would envy a product satisfaction rating of 93 percent, especially if the initial benchmark was 66 percent. But to have that satisfaction level endure for three years is a testament to staying power.

"Married and Loving It!" is an innovative curriculum introduced in 2000 that continues to change lives and preserve marriages. "It's natural for programs to decline after you've been teaching them awhile, but for the satisfaction rate to remain that high indicates there are some positive behavioral changes," explains University of Idaho Extension Educator Barbara Petty, author and primary deliverer of the program.

A pre-test shortly after she began teaching the curriculum indicated that only 66 percent of the participating couples were satisfied with their marriage. After completing the program, 92 percent indicated marital satisfaction. Petty wanted to test the durability of the Married and Loving It! instruction, so the UI conducted a 2003 telephone survey of couples who participated the first year. Ninety-three percent said they were "very satisfied" with their relationship.

Working Through Differences

Communication and finances, two of marriage's mortal enemies, are focal points of the curriculum. Using an interactive approach, Petty helps couples discover ways they can work through differences without becoming divided. It's a message of nearly universal appeal. Now available on CD, Married and Loving It! has spread to 32 states and even to China and Australia.

Petty has outlined the program for audiences in Dallas, Orlando, Washington, D.C., and Reno.



Couples of all ages—391 participants in all since start-up in 2000—have taken "Married and Loving It!"

She has presented at the Smart Marriage Conferences supported by the Coalition for Marriage, Family and Couples, which includes about 150 workshop sessions and draws 2,000 participants from a dozen nations. Petty's repeat presentations at the conference were responsible for its spread abroad.

The program has received two national awards—the National Marketing Package Award and the Florence Hall Award for an innovative program related to emerging issues—and won a regional award for Educational Technology.

Yet, the most important acknowledgment of the program's worth comes from participants. When Petty teaches the series each February in Idaho Falls, the 34 available spots fill quickly; a like number is maintained on a waiting list. Participants have ranged from teenagers in high school, to a husband and wife in their 70s who had been married 53 years.

Several couples have taken the series twice. One session attracted three generations from the same family; one woman was pregnant when she began, delivered a baby on Tuesday and was back in class on Thursday. Three colleagues from the same orthodontic office attended together. And 15 couples completed the series with perfect attendance.

Since Married and Loving It! made its debut five years ago, more than 390 people have participated in Idaho. Of those involved in the initial year, 93 percent indicate they still are very satisfied with the outcome.

"I think it will just continue to grow," Petty said of Married and Loving It!, "especially with President Bush's emphasis on marriage."

• Contact Petty at 529-1390 or bpetty@uidaho.edu

Early Learning Leads to Fast Start in Schools

Parents have long lamented that children don't come with instruction manuals. Too often, parenting skills are learned by trial and error.

A University of Idaho Extension program affirms the critical role parents play in the intellectual and emotional development of their children and provides them the skills necessary to prepare children for formal education. Idaho's Parents as Teachers uses national curriculum to help parents understand the cognitive process of youngsters between birth and 4 years of age.

The program is delivered by 13 parent educators throughout Idaho and supervised by six UI Extension educators: Sue Traver (Bonner County), Carol Hampton (Boundary County), Diana Christensen (Gooding County), Lorie Dye (Jefferson County), Katheen Tiff (Nez Perce), and Linette Riley (Power County).

“The program takes core concepts down to the levels of life.”

Research indicates that 18,000 5-year-olds enter Idaho kindergarten classrooms every year. How well they have been prepared for that transition will have a critical influence on their success in primary grades, and ultimately on their success as adults. The development of social, emotional, language, and communication skills are important for children entering the classroom environment. Their ability to listen and understand, and their skill in expressing themselves and being understood demonstrate a readiness for formal education.

Age-Specific PAT Lessons Are in Homes

PAT has four primary components, explains Harriet Shaklee, UI Extension family development specialist. Parent educators make personal, in-home visits with participants every month, providing material appropriate for each stage of a child's cognitive development. They also engage in group meetings with parents and children each month, arrange for special screenings to determine potential learning barriers, and, when appropriate, refer participants for professional help.

“The program takes core concepts down to the levels of life,” Shaklee said. At the same time, curriculum is firmly based on research to address the social, emotional, intellectual, language, and physical skills children will need in the school environment.

Studies suggest that children in the Parents as Teachers program are more advanced in language, problem solving, and social development at age 3 than children who have not participated. An additional benefit is the continued involvement of parents in the educational pursuits of their children. Participating parents tend to be more involved in school activities, attend parent teacher conferences, and volunteer in the classroom.

Many of Idaho's families reside in rural areas where programs for parents are not commonly available. For those isolated families, PAT is a unique and invaluable resource, Shaklee said. Currently, curriculum and all material are provided at no cost, and participation is on a voluntary basis. Sustaining the program will require support from participants.

• For more information about PAT contact Shaklee at 364-4016 or hshaklee@uidaho.edu

Snapshots from Five ‘Parents as Teachers’ Sites

In **Bonnors Ferry**, UI Extension parent educator Candi Kelly makes monthly visits to nine family childcare centers, sharing research-based information on children's growth and development, emergent literacy and kindergarten readiness, and specific behavioral issues.

The educational materials also reach the children's parents. One care provider commented, “It gives me the opportunity to talk out problems and bounce ideas off a person who is just as concerned with the children I care for as I am.”

In **Boise**, Terri MacDonald, a parent educator with the Agency for New Americans, visits a Somali Bantu family with three young children who arrived from Kenya four months earlier. “They have no point of reference for so many things we take for granted, like children's books,” MacDonald says.

The impact of her visits became poignant when she entered the home to find Dr. Seuss's *Hop on Pop* open on the table. Family members had been reading together in their new language, English.

Julia Thaete, **Gooding County**, visits two families who have children with Asperger's Syndrome, a condition that impairs a child's social interactions. “After the difficult process of getting a diagnosis, families need help finding ways to help their children be successful.”

Thaete identified funding and collaborated with colleagues in her region to host a conference on autism and related disorders in an effort to help childcare professionals learn more about the condition. The conference attracted 185 participants in the Magic Valley.

In **Benewah County**, parent educator Joanne O'Dwyer shares her passion for books with families and helps them connect with the local library. Many families became regular patrons after a parent meeting at the library.

O'Dwyer offered a reading program during the kindergarten registration to “help children and families make the connection that reading is important and fun.”

Parents as Teachers educator Rosanna Campbell collaborated with Hillcrest School staff, Power County Head Start, a community library, high school student organizations, parents, and community members in **American Falls** to bring an “alphabet quest” to children and families.

A to Z Museum, a community-wide event, provided an alphabetical family adventure with hands-on fun and information about emerging literacy, community resources, and other topics.

Examples are from “Kindergarten Ready,” a UI Family and Consumer Sciences newsletter published in February 2005.



Employees from the Coop Country Store attended the Customer Service workshop taught in January 2005.

Zen and the Art of Customer Service

When we think of the stereotypical salesman hawking, for example, used cars, the notion does not immediately conjure the six pillars of customer service—generosity, truth, vision, balance, grace, and trust—though it succinctly defines the need for them.

Fortunately, UI Extension Customer Service workshop participants are not stereotypes, but real business people attempting to bring customers in, and keep them coming back. One program graduate's summary of the six pillars of customer service appears in the program's exit evaluation: "Take care of your customer like you would your grandmother."

In 2004-05, UI Extension offered workshops in customer service in Bonner and Boundary counties. Partnering with the Sandpoint Chamber of Commerce, UI Extension educators Sue Traver from Sandpoint and Sarah Howe of Bonners Ferry presented 10 two-hour Customer Service Training workshops to approximately 230 participants.

Participants consistently report increased confidence in their ability to diffuse an angry customer; increased ability to make the most of first impressions; increased knowledge of the skills necessary to deliver great customer service; and agree that delivering service that makes a positive, lasting impression takes more than simple courtesy.

"The crew I have probably hasn't gone through a lot of sales training before, but they have experience, initiative, and intu-

ition," notes workshop participant Ray Delay, general manager of the Coop Gas & Supply Co. Inc., D.B.A, Coop Country Store at Sandpoint. "Sometimes it takes someone like Susan to put things in perspective."

One key to success is good communication within the sales team, Delay notes. "Sue finished her last session with a little game. We were in groups of four to five, and she handed each of us instructions to build a structure out of Legos®, but we were not allowed to communicate those individual instructions to the members of our team. So you tried to do your job, and everybody else wanted to do theirs... You could go on and on about what you learned in just those five minutes. Including how you want

...strong customer service skills may prove essential...

to treat people, and communicate with people, and meet the needs of the team."

With big box stores such as Home Depot heading to Sandpoint in 2005, strong customer service skills may prove essential to building and retaining their customer base, Delay notes. Even not-for-profit businesses, like the East Bonner County Library, have found the workshops beneficial. Approximately 36 library employees recently attended.

Gloria Ray, administrative librarian in charge of references, technical services, and adult programs, notes, "The techniques that people learn also make them more confident, and that allows them to enjoy their jobs more. I think the new approach is not just watching the bottom line, but is more philosophical. It's about making your customers happy. In the long term, that is going to increase your profits."

Those profits also seem to include more rewarding relationships in the workplace between employees, and between employees and the customers they serve.

• Contact Traver at 263-8511 or straver@uidaho.edu and Howe at 267-3235 or sarahs@uidaho.edu

Parents as Teachers by the Numbers

PAT conducted 13,150 home visits, 414 group meetings, and served 3,167 children in 2004. Other highlights:

- 415 kindergarten age by fall 2004
- 15% homes where English is not the primary language
- 2,086 received screening services
- 250 referred to developmental assistance
- 80 referred for vision or hearing tests



For more information on UI Extension programs, call 885.5883 or access our web site at www.uidaho.edu/extension