I, Too, Am America Camp

A summer youth camp, I Too Am America, held in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service - Shawnee National Forest, creates a positive outdoor educational experience for low-resource minority youth. Over the last three years, over 900 youth and over 50 adult volunteers have participated in the program, involving the archeological investigation of African-American homestead sites occupied in the 1840’s. Professional Forest Service archaeologists allowed these young people to have hands-on participation in the excavation. 98% of the participants reported they developed more pride and appreciation of their heritage and community by participating in this program. These students also indicated that they would utilize this new information at school to help others understand more about archaeology and would use the experience to write reports on black history.

Tazewell County Women Get Heart Smart

A twelve-week course entitled, "Heart Smart for Women" and funded through an Illinois Department of Public Health: Office of Women's Health grant, is designed to help women become more active and increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Over 160 women participated in this Extension-sponsored program in 2004 and 74% of them indicated they increased their physical activity, 85% were able to improve on their 6-minute walk test distance, 68% indicated they had increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables, and 94% said they improved their knowledge of exercise and diet.

Changing minds, improving bodies.

When asked what they learned from this program, one participant said "I have been motivated to get real with eating right and exercise...no longer living to eat, but eating to live." Another participant commented, "My eating habits were terrible. Now I pay attention to what I eat and how much."

Over 400 Attend Chicago’s Money Smart Week Activities

Extension’s financial education activities reached more than four hundred Illinois residents during the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago’s third annual Money Smart Week in 2004.

Financial education activities included: “What Every Student Needs to Know about Credit”, a workshop presented to 23 Pontiac Township High School students; "Organizing Your Financial Records", a seminar presented to a standing-room only crowd of 320 and an exhibit for the Financial Resource Fair, visited by 1200 individuals, both at the Chicago Department on Aging 2004 Citywide Senior Citizens Conference: a "Welcome to the Real World" simulation for 32 youth at the Kankakee Youth Conference; "Record keeping: What To Keep and How Long", a workshop for 41 members of the Markham Seniors and Law Enforcement Together (SALT) group; and a train-the-trainer workshop presented to Metropolitan Family Services staff, entitled “Golden Years Security: A Guide to Financial Management for Seniors”.

Preparing for Soybean Rust

Soybean rust is a devastating disease that could drastically reduce yield and increase production costs, should it arrive in the continental United States. Since its arrival in South America in 2001, soybean rust has steadily moved northward. The University of Illinois Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Team worked with government and industry to develop a plan to monitor fields for, verify the presence of, and educate clientele about this foliar disease.

IPM Team members prepared a sampling protocol and conducted a multi-state Soybean Rust Videoconference. Of the 543 producers and agricultural professionals who participated from eleven north-central states, 46% were from Illinois.

99% of Illinois respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this session increased their ability to identify soybean rust, and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that this session increased their understanding of IPM strategies and options for the control of soybean rust.
Master Gardeners Nurture Others Through Horticultural Therapy

University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners are sharing their love of plants and gardening to benefit the elderly; the handicapped and disabled; and incarcerated youth and adults. These volunteers used live plants and horticultural activities to improve the mental, physical or spiritual aspects of life for about 7,000 residents of Illinois in 2004.

Master Gardeners from the Peoria, Sangamon-Menard, Champaign, and Macon counties work with kids at juvenile detention centers, behavioral health centers and schools for abused and neglected youth. Kids learn how to grow vegetables and flowers, and more importantly, learn important life skills.

In Tinley Park, a partnership between Master Gardeners and Easter Seals, helps autistic children learn about plants in a garden designed especially for them. Many county Master Gardener programs focus on Horticulture Therapy, in which volunteers teach nursing home residents how to arrange flowers, grow houseplants and make container gardens.

Master Gardeners assist residents in planting and maintaining gardens at locations such as the Shabbona Health Care Center, DeKalb County and Bel-wood Nursing Home, Peoria County.

Statewide Leadership Conference: Building A Brighter Future

The Illinois Statewide Leadership Conference, now in its seventh year, is designed for people who are in leadership positions, serve on a board of directors, or are working on community projects, and seeking to manage community involvement in those projects more effectively.

Audiences range from elected officials such as mayors and county board members, to community volunteers and board members of service organizations.

The conference provides skill-building, new ideas and opportunities for attendees to network and learn from one another. Topics vary from year to year, but have included identifying demographic trends, defining leadership roles, designing change strategies, involving youth in decision-making, managing meetings, team building and working with the media.

Conference ratings are consistently excellent. Participants report they are able to more effectively lead and manage initiatives in their communities and organizations. One participant said, "My community joined together to raise funds for a $3.2 million aquatic center in Taylorville." Another reported, "I have become president of an organization." And another said, "We have formed a merchant's association, and our goals are more clearly defined."

Arab Teens Learn How 4-H Teaches Leadership Skills

For a few days in July 2004, twelve Henry County 4-H families had the opportunity to host eighteen Arab teens from Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon. These teens wanted to meet other teens and learn about the 4-H program, so members of the Maple Leafs, Geneseo Jr. Leaders, Atkinson Boosters, and Wethersfield Plow Jockeys 4-H Clubs put together a "mock 4-H meeting" to help explain how 4-H teaches leadership and other life skills.

Twenty-five 4-H'ers presented talks and demonstrations, conducted a brief business meeting as well as a recreational activity.

The Arab teens were impressed by the 4-H'ers skills and both groups learned about each other's cultures. These teens discovered that they have many things in common and fewer differences than they might have imagined.

For more information on these and other University of Illinois Extension programs, contact your local Extension office or visit our website: www.extension.uiuc.edu

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