



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
EXTENSION

Extension in ACTION

The Joint Council of Extension Professionals is a collaboration of University of Illinois Extension employee associations. These associations are working to enable people to improve their lives and communities through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work.

A New World of Leadership

"Aho! A New World of Leadership!" was the theme for the first ever Southern Illinois Leadership Convention (SILC) held in October in Makanda.

Sponsored by University of Illinois Extension, 49 delegates and adult chaperons and 15 teen and adult planning committee members from 24 Illinois counties attended this event to better prepare themselves for leadership roles in today's world.

Convention attendees participated in a variety of workshops including: identifying strengths and weaknesses in people, career exploration, diversity, communicating with difficult people, program planning, time and stress management, facilitating meetings, and current leadership skills. They also experienced team building activities, dances, a mystery theater, and a presentation from business entrepreneur Curt Jones, the founder of Dippin' Dots, Inc.©

Ninety-six percent of participants said they learned leadership skills they could use while 92 percent said they observed real examples of leadership and 77 percent reported being better able to work with adults.

One 4-H leader remarked, "Three teens who attended the convention from my club are now better at planning programs for my group because of the program planning workshop they attended." One delegate commented, "Because of the SILC workshop I attended at Touch of Nature Environmental Center, I have taken on new roles in my 4-H club and in one of my clubs at school. It's pretty fun too!"



Website Reaches Thousands of Students

Schools Online is a collection of 38 imaginative science-based websites and teaching curricula for students and teachers. The website focuses on helping youth understand many scientific wonders in our world.

Produced by U of I Extension, one website, *The Great Plant Escape*, helps students learn the mysteries of plant life; *Out on a Limb* teaches

youth how to better manage conflicts and challenges; and *Riding the Winds with Kalani*, a brand new site, is designed for 6-8 year olds and teaches children about temperature, clouds, and precipitation.

In the last 12 months, almost 4 million teachers and students from 181 different countries have learned from Schools Online websites.

Many of which are in Spanish as well as English. One is even in Arabic. "The websites I have seen have been fabulous," says one teacher. "I am so excited that I happened to stumble upon *The Great Plant Escape* one day. I have used it with my fourth graders as we study plants and they seemed to really get a lot from it. AND it kept them interested. I am so impressed."

web.extension.uiuc.edu/state/schools.html



Women and Teens Committing to Self-Care

Over 200 women learned about breast health and the risks associated with breast cancer in a program taught by Extension Community Health Educators in Cook County. *On the Road to Breast Cancer Prevention*, a curriculum written by U of I Extension, targets teens, African American and Latina women, and women who partner with women.

Through community based organizations at 15 Cook County sites, women attended four sessions focusing on breast anatomy, lumps

and bumps, breast cancer risk, and making a contract with one's self. More than 150 participants made a commitment to either obtain a mammogram, clinical breast exam, and/or conduct self-breast exams.

As one participant stated, "This was a great group with lots of information

that can be very useful to women, especially within the African American Community."

This cancer prevention program, taught in English and Spanish, is funded in part through Ticket for the Cure funds, administered through the Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health.



Youth Teaching

Youth

Parents, youth and staff members at the Boys & Girls Club of West Cook County recently identified substance abuse as a real health concern. Club members serving as youth health educators then received training from U of I Extension staff on the effects of tobacco and alcohol use, as well as effective refusal skills. In turn, the youth health educators taught these topics to 36 children at the club.

Impact evaluations demonstrated that youth health educators increased their knowledge about the effects of alcohol and tobacco on the brain and the steps to an effective refusal. In turn, 81 percent of the children taught were able to describe the effects of alcohol on the brain and of tobacco on the lungs as well as effective refusal.

The youth health educators became knowledgeable, positive role-models for the children. The desire and ability of the youth health educators to share this newfound knowledge has created interest in offering future lessons on healthy eating, physical activity and gardening.



Wellness at the Worksite

Wellness at the Worksite, a Cass County initiative designed to address increasing health care costs, resulted in 65 Cass County government employees participating in this 14-week U of I Extension sponsored program.

Employees cited “losing weight” and “getting healthy” as reasons for participating and all were initially measured for Body Mass Index (BMI) and percentage body fat.

In addition to attending 30-minute weekly classes on healthy lifestyles taught by Extension educators at three worksites, each participant received monthly newsletters, a pedometer and a log book to track their steps.

The 53 percent completing the program realized a total weight loss of 112 pounds,

ranging from 1 to 26 pounds per person. Fifty-six percent of the participants lost fat mass and 17 percent lost body fat.

Final evaluations indicated that 43 percent of participants now consume more fruits and vegetables, 50 percent are exercising more often, and 79 percent said, “They feel better.” As a result of the program’s success and positive participant feedback, it will continue in 2008.



Healthy Horses in Healthy Habitats

Each year Illinois’ 200,000 horses consume 500,000 tons of hay and grain worth \$100 million. To help horse owners in McDonough and Sangamon and Menard Counties maximize the production capabilities of their pastures, U of I Extension offered a series of programs entitled *Healthy Horses in Healthy Habitats*.

Forty-seven horse owners attending these sessions learned how to properly:

- identify forage pests,
- compost manure,
- fertilize pastures,
- improve horse structures and fencing,
- test hay to determine forage quality, and
- match the amount of forage fed to their horse’s nutritional needs.

As a result of attending this program, 64 percent of participants indicated they improved their knowledge of forage quality and pests.

One horse owner commented that as a result of attending this program, “I realized I am overfeeding my horses with too high-protein alfalfa hay.” Another said, “I have more of an idea of what to look for and learned better ways to control weeds.”



Pond Ecosystem Natural Resource Management

One hundred sixty-five southern Illinois pond owners gathered on a Williamson County farm in the fall to learn basic pond management skills and techniques.

This program, sponsored by U of I Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Services, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts and the Fountain Bluff Fish Farm, offered workshop sessions on fish management, pond weed control, construction, and general management techniques. As a result of attending this program: 53 percent of participants learned how to monitor fish health, 33 percent learned how to control pond weeds, 26 percent now plan on constructing a pond to control property erosion, and 20 percent will improve ground cover stands around their present pond.

According to one participant, “The real pond setting made the program ‘more exciting.’”

