



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.

Teen Pregnancies Drop to Zero!



University of Illinois Extension's cutting edge "Teen R.I.S.K." simulation results in smarter decisions that lead to healthier teen sexuality, according to cooperating teachers.

After participating in this program for the last four years, one high school teacher remarked that it was the first time in her six years at that school that there had been NO reported pregnancies. She credited "Teen R.I.S.K." with influencing this outcome. The teacher indicated, "That's why I have you come back every year."

Over 1500 middle and high school students in west central Illinois have participated in Extension's Teen R.I.S.K. (Real Issues of the Sexual Kind) simulation. Ninety-nine percent of the students reported increased knowledge about the risks of sex, condom use, and multiple partners, and 79% planned to avoid risky behavior due to the program.

Comments from students include:

"Extension should go to schools from town to town. You have saved many lives today."

"This should be a mandatory thing for students to go through. It really helped me."

"You will be in the future decisions I make."

Methamphetamine Training Programs

Survey results indicating the need for Methamphetamine Awareness Training led the Williamson County Extension staff to coordinate outreach programs focusing on local meth usage.

The following programs were coordinated with the Illinois State Police and local groups:

- A public meeting entitled "Understanding Methamphetamine Problems and Its Effects on Communities."

- The development of "First Response Youth Meth Victim Care Packages" provided to local law enforcement. One hundred sixty pullover robes made by Williamson County Home and Community Education members are included in the care packages given to children present at a meth arrest.



- A "Meth Awareness Program" presented to 350 students in Longfellow Elementary School by UI Extension and Southern Illinois Regional Social Services.

- A "Let's Party Drug Free" meth abuse training program presented to the Carterville and Marion Junior High "Teens in Action" group of 53 students.

Meth training provided through funding from the Illinois Attorney General's office.

Cook County Master Gardeners Solve Problems Online

Drought. Bindweed. Ravenous rabbits. Box elder bugs. And now the Emerald ash borer.

This may sound like a modern-day version of the ten plagues, but it's all in a day's work for the Chicago/Cook County Extension's Electronic Plant Clinic.

Powered by a volunteer team of Master Gardeners, the Electronic Plant Clinic (EPC) helps thousands of Illinois home gardeners via the Internet each year. This free virtual clinic is

open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and delivers speedy results: 95% of all queries are answered within three business days.

Cook County's 350 Master Gardeners in Cook County, including 100 trained in 2006, have been busy in other ways, too. In addition to the 2,123 questions answered through the EPC in 2006, Master Gardeners at Garfield Park and the Chicago High School of Agricultural Sciences

also shared their expertise by answering another 1,626 horticulture related questions in person or on the phone.

"You are a brilliant resource for my plant problems," reported one happy client. "I cannot express my appreciation enough," emailed another, "as you have given me information that I can act on."



Grant Resource Center—Unique Service from U of I Extension

The **Grant Resource Center**, a grant writing venture initiated by Crawford County Extension in 2002, is already strengthening local educational, economic and outreach programs. The center has helped 21 organizations receive grants totaling \$975,000. These organizations include the Crawford County Sheriff's Department, Kid's Kingdom Learning Center, Oblong Fire Department, Palestine High School, County Youth Alliance and Lincolnland Agri-Energy.



Grant writing workshops, offered annually by the center, have attracted over 70 business and organization representatives, providing participants with grant writing basics and proposal development techniques. In addition, local groups are continually provided updated lists of potential funding sources, through **Grant Alert**, a bi-weekly email.

Insect Expo Engages Students in Entomology

Over 1000 fourth grade students from Clay, Cumberland, Jasper, Lawrence and Richland counties recently experienced hands-on entomology at an "Insect Expo," held at Olney Central College in Richland County. Eleven scientists from the Illinois Natural History Survey (INHS) brought 35 interactive exhibits filling the college gymnasium with an exciting educational 3-act play, "Insect Theatre."

Of the nearly 140 volunteers facilitating this event, the high school and college student volunteers learned valuable leadership and teaching skills as they interacted with the students. The Insect Expo, coordinated by University of Illinois Extension staff in the East

Central Region, grew into a collaborative event with the INHS, the Regional Office of Education #12, Olney Central College, Soil and Water Conservation, USDA, FFA and 4-H volunteers.

Teacher evaluations indicate that the Insect Expo complemented their classroom science activities and increased student interest in science.

One teacher commented, "We have not covered insects this year, but when we do this will help a great deal."



Annie's Project—Education for Farm Women

"I now have the tools/knowledge to stay on the farm," says one graduate of Annie's Project, a farm oriented training program for women. Initiated in Illinois in 2003, with 10 original graduates, Annie's Project has spread to nine midwestern states. It has helped over 2,000 women understand their roles in farm businesses.

During 18 hours of Annie's Project training, farm women learn about the five primary risk areas as defined by USDA: production, financial, marketing, legal and human resources. Six month follow-up surveys to graduates indicate

one third of the women report improved marketing and financial skills.

Within each class, women become mentors and find mentors to help them deal with situations unique to farm operations. Participants also have a hand in developing secondary Extension sponsored programs that continue their education, including: Women Marketing Grain, Retirement and Estate Planning for Women, Grain Inventory Management and Farm Financial Records for Farm Women. To date 460 women in Illinois have graduated from Annie's Project programs.

Master Gardener's Volunteer Hours = Over Two Million Dollars

Thanks to the volunteers' research skills and dedication to educating the public, gardeners around the state have learned how to grow healthier vegetables, protect valuable shade trees, and enrich their communities with flora displays.

Across the state 556 newly trained individuals with diverse backgrounds swelled the ranks of active Master Gardeners to over 3,500 volunteers based in 74 extension units in 2006. Putting a value on the volunteer hours returned by these individuals is daunting. In 2005, Illinois Master Gardeners tendered close to 152,000 volunteer hours. The value of the volunteer hours (Points of Life and Independent Sector—\$18.04/hour) equaled an estimated 2.72 million dollars.

