Healthy Habits Become Healthy Lifestyles

Healthy Habits for Every Child teaches PreK children basic hygiene methods, how germs spread, proper hand-washing techniques, as well as oral hygiene and healthy eating practices. The goal of the program is to help children make healthy lifestyle choices and develop good health habits early. Healthy Habits for Every Child addresses the physical development and health goals as outlined in the Illinois Early Learning Project.

The children who participate in this program gain knowledge and practice skills to keep them healthy throughout the year. In a post-program survey, one parent shared this comment about her son: “He never liked apples. Now he said that he ate one in school and likes them!”

Last year, more than 200 children in Cook County participated in this program and data collected from parents’ observations show a 14% increase in how often they see their child covering his/her mouth during sneezing and coughing. There was a 7% increase in how often parents observed their children using soap to wash their hands and a 5% increase in the number of parents who stated that their child can now name at least four fruits and vegetables.

Leadership Equals Service to Others

As society changes, we need young people who are prepared to lead and help communities. Twenty-three Effingham County 4-H Youth Ambassadors (ECYA) currently participate in the Effingham Leadership Academy. These ambassadors are currently developing seven aspects of leadership through hands-on experiences.

Throughout the academy, members have participated in community service projects, allowing them to practice leadership skills while learning the value of giving back. The impact on the community has been significant. ECYA members donated a total of 510 hours, translating into a cost savings of $10,327.50 to those organizations.

ECYA members are also utilizing their skills by taking on leadership roles in their communities and schools. One ECYA member, recently elected to a school group, struggled with how the group functioned. By using parliamentary procedures learned through the academy, the group is now running much more efficiently. Leading by example, they are also transferring their skills to other members of these groups.

I www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html
Radio PSAs Help Illinois Families Cope

With the economic downturn in the fall of 2008, the Southern Illinois Family and Consumer Science Task Force explored ways to reach families with timely, practical information. Focus groups were consulted in four counties about ways families could be helped to cope during tough economic times. The 80 participants suggested the most pertinent information would be simple, feasible ways to save on a lean budget.

Realizing that many households discontinued newspaper and internet service to save money, the task force instead concentrated on radio. U of I Extension educators created and sent 20, 30-second public service announcements to 60 Illinois radio stations via the weekly Ag Update. Over 800,000 Illinois residents have benefited from these realistic and practical messages.

To hear how Southern Region University of Illinois Extension staff accepts the challenge of helping families through tough times, go to the following website: http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/toughtimes/ and click on “Resources for Media.”

Earthquake Disaster Preparedness Benefits Everyone

University of Illinois Extension is leading a six-state effort to promote Earthquake Disaster Preparedness. These Midwest partners hosted two conferences, 2008-09. The evaluations revealed the participants have a direct impact on more than 19,500 people, allowing all to learn about the resources explained at the conferences.

Extension is working with the American Red Cross to provide “Masters of Disaster” curriculum kits to K-12 teachers across the Midwest. The kits are being purchased from a United States Department of Agriculture grant received by AJMPU, a five-county southern Illinois Extension unit.

In addition to the assistance these conferences provided local citizens, U of I Extension leadership worked with many organizations, including the Illinois Emergency Management Agency and the Illinois Department of Transportation to benefit our state by encouraging agencies to share limited resources to accomplish a similar goal.

Franklin Covey, Inc/Extension Partnership Reaps Benefits

In partnership with Franklin Covey, Inc., the University of Illinois Extension’s Certified County Officials program now offers training in The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, an internationally known leadership development program.

Reflecting on this program, which focuses on effective leadership and management practices, elected officials share: “This is a very empowering experience.” “It has left me with a feeling of excitement about applying this to my own life.” “I didn’t know what to expect, and it was more than what I thought it would be. It provided new ways to approach relationships that I think will be helpful.”

Recently, the 7 Habits workshop became a graduate level course available to educators and administrators in Illinois public schools. Enthusiastic evaluations include such comments as, “I have taken many courses (Masters Degree plus 16). This class by far has been the most informative, entertaining, worthwhile class.” “This is probably the best 3-hour course I have ever taken.”

In response to participant requests, a new course on transformational leadership for educators is under development and scheduled for the summer of 2010.

Community Matters

University of Illinois Extension and four U of I students recently helped the City of Galesburg develop an award-winning plan for the East Main Street Corridor in Galesburg. Extension’s Community Matters Program brought together faculty, staff and students from the U of I’s Department of Urban & Regional Planning and City of Galesburg community members to address local problems.

A critical element in this collaboration is the unique opportunity for community leaders to gain access to faculty expertise and student resources. For the City of Galesburg, the student work expanded their capacity to do planning. From the students’ perspective, the benefit was hands-on experience in communities while working with various University of Illinois faculty, Extension staff and community leaders.