



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.

Moon Walkers Return to Planet Earth

A 12-week “race to the moon” between Peoria, the Quad-Cities and Champaign County, used team competition to encourage people to improve their health by increasing physical activity. Almost 1600 people from 114 teams participated, including several worksite groups. While Champaign County was unable to defeat the other cities, the benefits were significant to participants.

Prior to the Moon Walk program, 27 percent of the Champaign County participants reported walking 21 miles or more per week. At the end of the program, this percentage increased to 51 percent! Fifty-six percent indicated they are likely to maintain their increased activity level due to the success they achieved.

One team captain wrote, “...this was a great way to encourage those I care about to get involved and change their level of activity...., there was a total of 35 pounds lost between four participants in my group. U of I Extension consistently offers high quality programs.”

All reporting was completed online, saving U of I Extension staff both time and resources and allowing participants the convenience of reporting anytime 24/7.

This program will definitely be continued due to its overwhelming success.



4-H GIS Team Impacts Community

Monroe County 4-Hers represented Illinois on the 2008 National 4-H Geographic Information System (GIS) Leadership Team and presented information about several local projects at an international GIS conference in San Diego held earlier this year.

This conference, attended by more than 14,500 GIS experts from 114 countries, provided these 4-H’ers the opportunity to learn about topics ranging from monitoring climate

change to determining evacuation plans in the event of a natural disaster.

Each year, more than 400 Monroe County youth are introduced to GIS and Global Positioning System technologies. Interested youths use these learned technologies to mark and map locations of restaurants, parks, recreation facilities, and historic sites, and to study local water ecology issues.

One local 4-H team saved an estimated 20 hours of county employee time and approximately \$500 when 4-H youth contributed a map of the courthouse square identifying the species of more than 50 storm-damaged and sound trees, thus freeing up resources to complete the county tree replacement plan.



Bilingual Pesticide Program Reaps Success

In Illinois, anyone who sprays a pesticide onto property other than their own must first obtain a pesticide license, which requires passing an exam offered only in English.

Though many Hispanic workers understand spoken English, they do not comprehend written English very well.

To fill this Green Industry need, day-long, bilingual Spanish pesticide clinics were offered in the Chicago

area and Southwestern Illinois.

In the last four years, over 400 Hispanics were trained at these bilingual clinics; and, as a result, Hispanics, who hear the information first in English and then in Spanish, are more likely to pass the pesticide exam.

Over 2/3 of the participants passed the exam and those who provided feedback credited much of their

success to these bilingual clinics.



Preparing for Motherhood

Monthly parenting classes for moms-to-be and their significant others in Franklin County are offering free medical advice, gift cards for diapers, lunch and nutrition lessons.

Collaborating agencies, which include Franklin County Extension, Southern Illinois University Family Medicine, Franklin-Williamson Human Services, Head Start, and other area teen parent programs, indicate that although this is an extremely difficult audience to reach, attendance is excellent and the program is reaching as many as 75 percent of their clients.



Participating agencies also report that 90 percent of their clients, low income individuals who might not otherwise receive proper medical care or other information, are gaining self esteem and feel good about belonging to a group that provides quality educational information.

Relationship Class Changes Teens' Lives

A relationship skills class, attended by over 2900 DuPage County high school students, provided information about what makes a healthy relationship, the importance of good communication, problem solving and conflict resolution techniques, wise budgeting practices and career exploration strategies. This class was sponsored by the Family Bridges program, a grant-funded collaborative effort between 25 agencies, including DuPage County Extension.

One of the 20 teen parents who completed a relationship skills class at Community High School in West Chicago said, "I learned you don't need a guy. If he treats you bad, that's not the guy for you. [Look for] someone that

supports you emotionally and is there for you whenever you need him."

According to their teacher, this class had an immediate impact on the lives of the teen mothers. Two girls left abusive relationships. A third gained the confidence to resolve issues with her boyfriend, and another teen reconciled with her father after her baby was born. These girls will now attend the next level of classes to build on their success.



Women on the Move

Each of the 300-plus participants in *Macoupin on the Move—Women Out Walking*, received educational materials, a pedometer, log book and the support of team group leaders through monthly meetings designed to motivate and encourage success.



At the first meeting, hip, waist and weight measurements were recorded and then repeated at the end of the three-month program. Twice a week, e-mails were sent out to encourage eating fruits and vegetables, walking and healthy living.

Program evaluations found:

- 78% exercised more
- 74% reduced waist measurement
- 73% consumed more fruits and vegetables
- 72% had a reduction of hip measurement
- 43% lost five or more pounds
- 31% averaged more than 10,000 steps a day

Macoupin on the Move was directed by Macoupin County Extension and the Macoupin County Health Department with funding from the Illinois Department of Public Health grant, Office of Women's Health.

Learning Center Aids Local Manufacturing Companies

A \$50,000 Employers Training Investment Program grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity was used to match the training costs of nine Illinois companies from East Moline to Carthage. The Prairie Tech Learning Center, a branch of the Henderson-Mercer-Warren Extension unit, used these funds to train employees in technology, health and safety, proper use of heavy equipment and management skills. One corporation reported, "By receiving these funds, we were able to protect employees working with electricity from arch flash hazards [and] . . . train [more] First Responders . . . to assist in cases of emergencies." In all, over 275 employees were trained in west-central Illinois through this program, and Prairie Tech is currently applying for additional funding to continue offering these types of services to the manufacturing community.

