



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.

## Girls Explore Science



Forty girls in the seventh and eighth grades attended Extension's first "Advanced Science Siesta" at the National Mississippi River Museum in Dubuque, Iowa. The program, open only to girls who have attended at least two Science Siesta events, is designed to engage girls in science careers while participating in a slumber party atmosphere.

Extension staff, as well as adult and youth volunteers from eight northwestern Illinois counties coordinated a full slate of science related activities for the event. Participants used flood and erosion tables to simulate human options in controlling waterways, tagged Monarch butterflies, conducted macro-invertebrate counts, and tested water samples from the Mississippi backwaters.

Participant evaluations indicate the event had a positive impact on their perception and attitude about science as a career option. Eighty-four percent said the event heightened their interest in science, while 98% felt the Advanced Science Siesta event helped them understand how science can be used to solve problems. Eighty-seven percent said they learned that science skills may be useful in securing a job.

**To learn more about University of Illinois Extension programs visit the following website:**

<http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/state/>

## SNAP Combines Nutrition and Leadership Skills

Encouraging teens to develop leadership skills can be a challenge, but implementing the Summer Nutrition Activity Playground (SNAP) program allowed Macon County 4-H Youth Development and Expanded Family Nutrition Education Program/Family Nutrition Program (EFNEP/FNP) staff to meet that challenge.

In a collaborative effort between University of Illinois Extension and the Decatur Park District, SNAP provided 97 inner-city children, ages 8 to 12, the opportunity to

increase their nutrition, character education and life skills.

Most importantly, twelve trained teen volunteer leaders from diverse backgrounds facilitated the SNAP program. Given the responsibility to select the program theme, plan and prepare healthy snacks, as well as design art and physical activities, the four month training program also resulted in increasing the teens' leadership skills.

A life skills pre/post test evaluation showed *significant* increases in the teens' leadership and

communication skills, the ability to take on added responsibility and make healthy lifestyle choices. In addition, over two-thirds of the youth attending the program scored 90% and above, reflecting an increase in nutritional skills.



## Chinatown Immigrants Prepare for Work

Extension sponsored a job readiness training program focusing on Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants in Chicago's Chinatown. The curriculum was designed to increase immigrants' knowledge of the job search and application process, and their comfort level in using computer technology.

Approximately 30 Chinese immigrants, from restaurant workers to stay-at-home mothers and seniors were seeking better job opportunities and a more prosperous life in America.



Workshops ranged from increasing computer skills and resume writing to conducting a job search, and preparing for an interview. American culture was also emphasized.

Upon graduation, three participants secured jobs,

and another is expecting a job offer.

"I am so happy that University of Illinois Extension is delivering programs to my doorstep. It is a blessing for people like me who don't have a car," said one participant.

## Bankruptcy Education Helps Illinois Citizens

"I will use the information from this workshop to better control my spending and to save for emergencies." "I will make a budget." "I will start saving." These are comments resulting from the mandated debtor education course provided by University of Illinois Extension Consumer & Family Economics (CFE) educators.

In 2005, CFE educators partnered with the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) to offer a personal financial management course for debtors under the new Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act.

Educators were part of the pilot project in Chicago and tested the justice department's curriculum, "*Financial Education: Principles and Practice.*"

Offering this course in thirteen locations in three bankruptcy districts in Illinois reached 402 bankruptcy filers. 85% of the participants strongly agreed that their overall level of financial knowledge increased after taking the course. 95% strongly agreed that they would develop a household budget, and 100% stated they would recommend the workshop to others.

## Improving Illinois Lifestyle Census Statistics

According to the last census, Whiteside County residents are dying at higher than national rates from lifestyle influenced diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes.

"Fit for Life", developed by University of Illinois Extension and cooperating agencies, is a program emphasizing nutrition and exercise, yet recognizing the significant value of other lifestyle choices like rest, physical work, socialization, and laughter.

The program stresses that health is not an all or nothing proposition requiring guilt-driven discipline. Instead, it is a culmination of small daily choices – choices we should feel good about!

Initially, over 70 participated in this program in 2006. Of those surveyed, 96% claimed an

increased knowledge of healthy eating habits, 91% made positive changes in their daily routines, 93% increased their awareness of exercise and its role in weight control, strong bones, and disease prevention, and 93% increased their awareness of how daily decisions cumulatively impact one's health.



## Homeowners Take Action Against Radon

Testing for the presence of radon is the only way to know definitively if high concentrations of the gas exist in the home.

According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, radon gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer, just behind smoking. It is the first leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.

A University of Illinois Extension website ([www.TakeActionOnRadon.uiuc.edu](http://www.TakeActionOnRadon.uiuc.edu)) was designed to be used by homeowners, realtors, home builders and the public as they seek information about radon gas.

There have been over 37,600 hits to the website by educators gathering information for grade school and high school students,

agency staff, and the public. The website provides detailed information on how to test for radon, reduce radon levels in the home, install radon reduction systems in new home construction, and the need to test for radon during real estate transactions.

An added feature is that homeowners can email their questions to Extension educators and receive answers to their specific radon questions.



## EZregs—Making Sense of Illinois Environmental Regulations

Illinois producers baffled by the myriad of environmental regulations that pertain to agricultural and horticultural operations can now turn to "EZregs" for help. EZregs is a website ([www.ezregs.uiuc.edu](http://www.ezregs.uiuc.edu)) that provides detailed information about how regulations apply to livestock, crop, ornamental horticulture production and landscape maintenance operations in Illinois.

The EZregs website contains a variety of regulations related to environmental protection; safe and legal use of pesticides; livestock facility construction, management, and siting.

Frequently asked questions, supplied by subject-matter specialists familiar with the regulations and the typical user needs, provide an expert database that links to specific state and federal regulations. In addition to bringing up the appropriate subregulations, EZregs allows the author to supply an interpretation, add links to useful information, and identify glossary terms (legal definitions).

Since August 2006, there have been over 14,000 hits to this website.