Reducing the Risk of High-Nutritional Risk Seniors

The Situation
Older adults with varying degrees of malnutrition are found throughout north Idaho living in their own homes. Needs assessment data collected in 2002 from Aging & Adult Services (AAS) of North Idaho identified 349 (46%) of their in-home service clients as being high nutritional risk. Poor nutrition can lead to lost weight and strength, lessened immunity to disease, depression, confusion and disorientation.

Older adults at nutritional risk tend to make more visits to physicians, hospitals, and emergency rooms. Malnourished patients have longer hospital stays and are admitted to hospitals more frequently. Malnutrition exacerbates frailty and debilitation, causing more time, energy and money spent on care giving.

National statistics indicate four out of five seniors have chronic diseases affecting their diets, one in five skip meals daily, 87% do not eat necessary fruits, vegetables and dairy products on a daily basis, 40% have annual incomes less than $6,000, 33% live alone and 20% have trouble accessing necessary goods and services.

Aging & Adult Services of North Idaho has made helping their high-risk nutritional seniors a top priority. AAS has established funds for an outside contractor to provide education in specific subject matter to high-nutritional risk seniors living in northern Idaho in hopes of keeping clients’ living healthier and happier lives.

Our Response
University of Idaho Kootenai County Extension was awarded the Aging & Adult Services funds. These funds are being used in conjunction with District 1’s Extension Nutrition Program (ENP). The Senior Extension Nutrition Program (SENP) provides AAS clients with nutrition, money management and food safety education tailored to suit the unique needs of seniors living in their homes. Nutrition Advisors trained by University of Idaho Extension travel to AAS clients’ homes to provide educational lessons in nutrition and food safety.

Since this projects initiation, 95 high nutritional risk seniors have been enrolled in the program. Thirty-three seniors have graduated.

Program Outcomes
SENP uses a retrospective pre-test survey to assess program impact. FY 2003 data indicates the following behavior changes:
Participants eating 2 or more servings of fruit per day

Participants eating 3 or more servings of vegetables per day

Participants drinking 8 – 1 cup servings of water per day

Participants eating 3 or more servings of milk, yogurt, cheese or other calcium rich food per day

For More Information
Shelly Johnson, MS, Extension Educator
Kootenai County
1000 W. Hubbard St. Suite 140
Coeur d’Alene, Idaho 83815
208-446-1680
Fax: 208-446-1690
Email: sjohnson@uidaho.edu

Kali Gardiner, RD, ENP Coordinator
Kootenai County
1000 W. Hubbard St. Suite 140
Coeur d’Alene, Idaho 83815
208-446-1680
Fax: 208-446-1690
Email: kalig@uidaho.edu

Pearl Bruno Bouchard, MPA, Director
Aging & Adult Services of North Idaho
1221 Ironwood Drive, Suite 102
Coeur d’Alene, ID 83814
208-667-3179
Email: pbouchard@agingadultsvcs.org