

IMPACT



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Junior Master Gardener Latino Expansion Program Takes Off

The Situation

Junior Master Gardener™ (JMG) is a program for youth of all ages that uses fun activities to teach horticulture and environmental science concepts, using the experiential learning model where youth learn by doing. Currently, there are five registered JMG clubs in eleven counties throughout Idaho. Over 12,000 youth and 500 adults have been involved in the program since its inception in 2002.

However, in the first five years of the Idaho JMG program we reached 250 Latino youth.

In 2005, an informal survey conducted by the Idaho State 4-H Office of 52 Latino individuals ranging from age 15-24 suggested that 79% of the respondents had not participated in a 4-H club or program. Thus, the District II 4-H Youth Development Committee has identified meeting the needs of Latino youth as one of its highest priorities for the 2004-2009 period.

Spanish JMG resources are being made more available in Idaho in order to train Latino teachers and parents to become certified JMG facilitators. This pilot program funded by UI Extension Urban Grant aims to increase the awareness of important Latino health issues such as diabetes, exercise, and healthy eating habits.



Our Response

To meet these needs in the Latino community a focus group was conducted to guide the work of the program. The bilingual JMG programs were delivered to provide appropriate instruction for Latino youth, making experiences more rewarding and meaningful, as well as guaranteeing longer retention of the information. In addition three Latino JMG facilitators Jose Aguilar, Bea Murphy and Graciela Fitzgerald provided leadership to the program expansion.

Partnerships were formed with the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho, Boys and Girls Clubs, Nampa and Boise School Districts, Padres Unidos and the Día del Niño Celebration. The Agricultural and Extension Education Department in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, The Idaho State Department of Education, Child Nutrition Programs and Edwards Greenhouse, Boise also contributed to this educational effort.

Program Outcomes

The program was presented at four different venues. The first program was Padres Unidos, lasting 3 hours on one Saturday in April, reaching almost 20 youth. In that time children made Know and Show Sombreros and became more aware of plant needs. In order to measure outcomes, youth drew what a plant would look like healthy, without water, and without food. After the activities participants were asked to do the drawings again to measure how their

understanding of plants had changed. This was used to tie in what people need to be healthy.

JMG also participated in the Día del Niño Celebration in Caldwell, where youth did “make and take” Suck a Bugs and vermi composting. Over 400 youth discovered the importance of insects and their impact on the earth and the food we eat.



The last two programs were the Summer Migrant School Program in Nampa and the Boys and Girls Club in Garden City. The Summer

Migrant School Program was presented for 3 hours a week, over a 5-week period. The Boys and Girls Club was given a 1-hour program over a 3-week period. Both programs used the JMG Health and Nutrition curriculum. These lessons provided participants a chance to raise their awareness on important health topics related to Latinos that included obesity, making healthy snack choices, reading food labels and diabetes. There were 23 participants at the Boys and Girls Club, and over 500 at the Summer Migrant School.

Youth increased awareness, skills and competency in nutrition, gardening and health while doing fun “hands-on, minds-on” JMG activities. They were each given a young plant to grow at home upon completion of the program and the schools were able to use lessons that meet the USDA nutrition standards.

Summary

The Latino Pilot Expansion Program has been groundbreaking. Valuable partnerships have been created, schools have been able to meet new standards and the 4-H Junior Master Gardener Program has reached a new audience. The program will be expanded in 2007 with existing and new partnerships, as well as, providing certification for new Spanish speaking JMG facilitators and offering JMG awareness programs for Latino and bilingual adults.

Youth have gained enthusiasm about gardening, plants, food production and making healthy decisions. During one class a girl remarked “We can’t eat the ranch dressing with our carrots! That had the most fat out of all the other foods we looked at last week,” showing that even one hour a week can make a difference for a child.

For More Information

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