

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Jefferson County “Welcome to Our Area” Brings Residents, Community Leaders, and Extension Together

The Situation

Jefferson County is currently experiencing rapid population growth. New and long time residents are not always aware of what the University of Idaho Extension has to offer in their county. Also many residents of Jefferson County are not informed of what local services and public organizations are available in the county. Many residents have never met the local leaders such as the county commissioners. The commissioners and other leaders do not often have the opportunity to visit with residents in an informal setting.

Our Response

In 2005 the University of Idaho Extension Educators in Jefferson County proposed to the county commissioners the idea of an open house format called Welcome to Our Area. Welcome to Our Area would be organized by the Extension Educators. This would be an evening where residents of Jefferson County could come and meet the University of Idaho Jefferson County Extension staff and see what extension has to offer. County residents would be able to meet the county commissioners. Other community leaders and organizations would be represented. During the open house the residents would be able to see what services and organizations are available in Jefferson County.

In March of 2005 the first Welcome to Our Area was held in Rigby. Fifteen public entities were represented from the city, county, state, and federal governments.

In 2006, the county commissioners asked the extension to expand the Welcome to Our Area to two locations. The two locations selected were the Mud Lake/Terreton area and Rigby.

In March of 2006 the Mud Lake/Terreton Welcome to Our Area involved fourteen public organizations representing local, county, state, and federal entities.

In April 2006 the Welcome to Our Area was held in Rigby. The University of Idaho Jefferson County Extension collaborated with the Rigby Friends of the Library, Rigby Chamber of Commerce, and Parents As Teachers (PAT) to organize a community wide night called Discover Rigby’s Treasures. More public organizations and services were included than in 2005. Rigby businesses stayed open later that evening. Several local musical and dance groups entertained the public throughout the evening. Many venues were available for the public to visit. A community wide treasure hunt was organized and numerous door prizes were donated by local businesses. Through a grant to the Parents As Teachers, free books were given out to the children that evening.

Program Outcomes

Fifty residents attended the 2005 Rigby Welcome to Our Area. Though the numbers were small, attending residents gave positive comments. The three Jefferson County Commissioners commented that they thought it was very worthwhile. The organizations that were represented there said they all thought it was a good program. All of them commented that they were not aware of what all the other organizations had to offer. It also gave them each the opportunity to network with the others, for the first time in some instances, and find ways to help each other.

Thirty residents from the West Jefferson area attended the 2006 Mud Lake Welcome to Our Area. The responses by the public and the represented organizations were similar to the comments from the 2005 Rigby Welcome to Our Area.

The 2006 Rigby Welcome to Our Area – Discover Rigby’s Treasures was very successful. It was impossible to accurately count the number of residents attending. Rigby Main Street was closed to traffic, but was full of people. The various venues and businesses were filled over capacity.

The Parents As Teachers gave 600 children each a free book.

A survey was done among those who attended the Welcome to Our Area venue. The following were the results:

- Sixty-seven percent said that there were community services represented that evening that they were not aware of before.
- Fifty-seven percent responded that prior to this evening they were not aware of the services offered by the University of Idaho Extension.
- Sixty percent said that they had not used extension services prior to this evening.
- Sixty-nine percent said they received additional information about county services that they were already familiar with.
- Ninety-six percent responded that they would like to see this kind of event again.

Some comments made on the survey about the event:

“Not aware of all the services offered.”

“Great, we need more.”

“Glad to see the cooperation between entities, well done.”

“It was an informative event.”

“This was a great, informative evening especially for us because we are new residents.”

“This is a good family event.”

“Excellent job – do it again!”

“I did not know Rigby had extension services.”

“Why is the Jefferson County Fair not present?”

“This was a very well organized event.”

“A lot of work has been put into this – it’s great!”

For More Information

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