North Idaho’s Extension Nutrition Program
Making a Difference for Food Stamp Families

The Situation
The Food Stamp Program was established to improve the nutrition of people in low-income households. It does that by increasing their food-buying power, so they are able to purchase the amount of food their household needs. Food stamps often make the difference between hunger and food security. However, there is no legislative mandate to teach food stamp families how to link food security with healthy eating habits. Nutrition education should be used as a strategy to improve the lives and overall health of food stamp families.

Our Response
Food Stamp Nutrition Education, known in Idaho as the Extension Nutrition Program (ENP), is a community-based education program that teaches limited resource individuals how to stretch their food dollars to provide healthy, low-cost meals for their families. The District 1 ENP program encompasses the 10 northern counties in Idaho. Nutrition Advisors, trained by UI Extension faculty, educate families and individuals in basic nutrition, stretching their food dollar, food resource management, and food safety.

Group lessons have been taught at work first agencies, Head Start, Even Start, transitional housing locations, mental health agencies, and qualifying elementary schools across District 1. In-home visits are also offered to families.

Program Outcomes
In 2008, ENP Nutrition Advisors taught 539 group or one-on-one education lessons to 1,283 adults 399 youth lessons to 6,689 children. Planned behavior changes of adults and youth are as follows:

- 196 clients participated in the MyPyramid lesson with 53% of clients planning to eat more fruits and vegetables and another 19% of clients planning to eat more whole grain foods; 81% reported they learned something new.
- 173 clients participated in the Meal Planning lesson with 44% of clients planning to use store specials when planning meals, 26% planning on including all 5 food groups in their meal plans, and another 26% planning a use for leftovers to save time and money later on in the week; 75% reported they learned something new.
- 123 clients participated in the Making the Most of Your Food Dollar lesson with 37% of clients
planning on shopping with a grocery list and another 35% of clients planning to compare prices while shopping; 87% reported they learned something new.

- 94 clients participated in the Safe Food Handling lesson with 41% of clients planning to no longer thaw meat at room temperature and another 27% of clients planning to refrigerate or freeze leftovers within 1 hour; 72% reported they learned something new.

- 80 clients participated in the Eating Light and Right lesson with 38% of clients planning to eat more fruits and vegetables and another 23% planning on eating more low fat/non-fat milk products; 91% reported they learned something new.

**The Future**
In 2009, District 1 ENP will serve 10 counties in north Idaho with educational programming in nutrition, food safety, and food resource management for all food stamp recipients, as well as maintain strong partnerships with advisory board members and other agencies serving low-income populations.

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