

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Eden and Hazelton participate in the Horizons community leadership program

The Situation

Many rural communities in Idaho struggle with declining populations, economic decline, and rising poverty. Given the current recession, the above situation is affecting smaller communities even greater. Currently, Eden, Idaho with a population of 411 and an overall poverty rate over 18% and Hazelton, Idaho with a population of 687 and an overall poverty rate over 29% face these problems.

To address this situation and promote prosperous communities, where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, University of Idaho Extension partnered with the Northwest Area Foundation to develop a community leadership program to address poverty.

Our Response

The Horizons program is a community leadership program aimed at reducing poverty in small rural and reservation communities with a population less than 5,000 and a poverty rate above 10% in a seven state region. The program is funded by the Northwest Area Foundation (www.nwaf.org).

This 18-month program consists of four required phases.

1. Study Circles (community conversation and action ideas focused on poverty)
2. Leadership Plenty training (leadership building)
3. Community Visioning (focus on leadership, growth, and poverty reduction)
4. Community Action to Reduce Poverty (alignment of energy around Common Vision)

University of Idaho Extension delivers the program with the assistance of individual community coaches in 15 rural communities in south central and eastern Idaho.



Leadership Plenty participants.

University of Idaho Jerome County Extension Educator, Lyle Hansen serves as the Horizons Community Coach for Eden and Hazelton. Through his leadership, both communities have successfully progressed through the first three phases of the Horizons program, meeting the thresholds for each level.

Program Outcomes

Study Circles: Eight community members were trained as Study Circle facilitators in September 2008. The Eden and Hazelton facilitators led six study circle groups with over 60 community residents. The community residents talked about challenging issues that shape what poverty looks like locally and what they could do about it.

Post-program surveys measured community members' knowledge and understanding of poverty before and after their study circle experience. Surveys completed by the participants indicate over 60% increased their knowledge of poverty and over 50% have already taken action.

Leadership Plenty: Six local residents were trained in January 2009 to become certified Leadership Plenty trainers. These six led two nine module Leadership Plenty trainings to over 40 community participants in Eden and Hazelton. Participants of the Leadership Plenty trainings learned community leadership skills and realized that everyone is capable of providing leadership. Results of post-program surveys indicate that 87% of participants increased their knowledge of leadership skills and 63% attributed their leadership skills to the Leadership Plenty program. As a result of the Leadership Plenty program, one participant from Eden and one from Hazelton are running for city council.

Community Visioning: Over 200 community residents attended the May 18, 2009 Eden and Hazelton Community Planning Rally at the Valley School. The goal of the planning rally was to create and adopt a shared vision for creating a community where everyone can thrive. Eden-Hazelton Community Vision Statement is as follows:

“Eden-Hazelton is a close-knit, cohesive community. We collaborate to create fun and exciting events which draw our community residents closer together. Our young people are an important part of our community and are a key part of shaping our future. We treasure and value our small town atmosphere.

We have a strong rural community economy that builds on our heritage and proud history of farming and agriculture. We have innovated and diversified from this base to create new strength with value added farm based and food industries. Our community has capitalized on our cultural and recreation events to provide opportunities for locals and visitors.”

The Future

By completing the entire Horizons program a community can expect:

- Community Leaders who come from all ages, backgrounds, and incomes;
- Up to \$10,000 in grant funds per community to sustain community strategies for poverty reduction and leadership;
- Connections to many organizations and hundreds of other Horizons Communities that can help into the future;
- Changes from within the community allowing continued poverty reduction and community development.

Until April of 2010, the Eden and Hazelton Horizons Communities will be working on five identified action areas.

1. Resource Guide (community guide)
2. Think Tank Group (long range financial planning, retain financial businesses, and create new business opportunities)
3. Community Garden/Farmers Market (crafts and local homemade goods)
4. Emergency Preparedness/Affordable Health Services (research issues and available services)
5. Community Center/Youth Activities (research and identify a location)

Teams will be creating a work plan and recruiting new members. Horizons members will also be identifying specific trainings that can be brought into the communities to help them better work on the identified action areas. Action teams are currently moving ahead in their efforts to help the communities of Eden and Hazelton become thriving communities where everyone has opportunities to succeed and to help reduce poverty.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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