

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Jefferson County newsletter reaches broad clientele

The Situation

Jefferson County is a rapidly growing community between Rexburg and Idaho Falls. At a community event sponsored by the Extension office, called "Welcome to our Area," Extension Educators discovered that many people in Jefferson County were unaware of the Extension office and what it had to offer. The Jefferson County Extension office did send out a newsletter on an irregular basis, but it only had 300 subscribers. Most of the people who received the newsletter had attended Extension programs or been involved in the 4-H program.

In 2004 a second Extension Educator was hired. This gave the office expertise in Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H and Agriculture, including home horticulture. Jefferson County faculty and staff determined that a regular newsletter containing research based information and program offering would be the best way to reach a much larger audience. It would also offer information that could increase the knowledge and make a positive change their lives.

Our Response

Office faculty and staff set goals for the newsletter. They felt ten issues a year was necessary to keep people informed. A wide variety of information was important to make sure the newsletter met the needs of many different people

Overcoming the problems of cost and logistics was next. The faculty met with the county commissioners and discussed their plans to increase the number of newsletters and people receiving it. The Commissioners then awarded the office money to meet these goals.

The Extension office faculty and staff then addressed the problems of the current subscription list. There



were old addresses, deceased people, duplicate subscriptions and addresses no longer in service. The problem was approached by sending out a post card requesting a response. The person could check any of the choices on the card that applied. The choices included to continue getting the newsletter and to specify in what form they would like it, printed or electronic, or to no longer subscribe. The return rate from the post cards was very high.

From the information received the mailing list was updated. To increase the number of people receiving the newsletter, a roll was sent around at every class taught asking if they would like to receive the newsletter. Also, every person that came into the office to get information was asked if they currently receive the newsletter and if not, would they like to subscribe. Our mailing list of interested clientele quickly increased.

Currently the newsletter sent out contains four sections. There is an article on a Family and Consumer Sciences subject written by Lorie Dye, an article from Brian McLain on agriculture or home horticulture, an article on 4-H and related activities by Sue Walker the 4-H coordinator and a memo and calendar of events and programs by Shayla Baird the office manager.

Program Outcomes

As a result of the commitment to a county wide newsletter the subscription list has increased from 300 to 800. Another 180 are sent out electronically by email. New subscribers are encourage to receive the newsletter by email, if possible. It is much more cost efficient for the office. They can also take advantage of links to other newsletters and it comes in color. Moving more subscribers to an electronic newsletter is an office goal as well. It cost 84 cents per newsletter to copy it and send it in the mail. The current saving is \$151 per issues by sending the 180 newsletters out electronically.

The Jefferson County Extension office has received many positive comments about the newsletter. People like reading it. It also informs them about classes they can sign up for, upcoming events and seminars. The majority of participants that sign up for our classes and seminars learn about it through the newsletter. Recipients also spread the word to their friends and neighbors. When an Extension Educator teaches a class the participants have the opportunity to subscribe to the newsletter. The newsletter mailing list continues to grow and has proven to be a valuable method to reach Jefferson County clientele.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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