

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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Community members ready to make a difference in Kamiah

The Situation

Community leadership is not defined by or dependent on the behavior of individual leaders alone, but a system based on relationships and interaction among a diverse group of community members working toward collective goals. A study by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development found investing in leadership development to be essential to a community's capacity to respond, anticipate and adapt to constant local, national and world changes. In addition, their analysis showed a frequent need for outside facilitation and support for community-based efforts to be effective. University of Idaho Extension continues to invest in the sustainability of Idaho's rural communities with the ongoing development of human and social capacity building programs to engage individuals in planning, leading, and supporting intentional positive change needed for all members of a community to thrive.

Our Response

During the summer of 2010, Nez Perce County Extension collaborated with the Spirit Center at St. Gertrude's to write leadership curriculum emphasizing basic skills and to design a training to implement the curriculum in rural Idaho communities. Curriculum segments developed include Diversity & Inclusivity in Leadership, Meaningful Meetings, Building Teams that Go Beyond, Reaching a Decision, Understanding Controversies and Managing Conflict, Relevant Engagement, and Your Leadership Journey.

The curriculum was piloted the following spring with a hand-selected small cohort of formal and informal area leaders to seek input on the content and methodology of the training. Their suggestions were researched and used to adapt the curriculum and



Class picture for Kamiah's Leadership To Make a Difference Institute. Photo by Mary Schmidt.

develop the Leadership to Make a Difference Institute (LMDI).

The LMDI is a three-day intensive training for existing and emerging leaders to develop and refine their basic leadership skills. The program is designed to assist people in developing confidence in their own leadership abilities and the courage to take action addressing community issues through:

- Greater understanding of self, others, and community,
- Strengthened skills for leading meetings, working with others, and dealing with conflict,
- Strategies for communicating, partnering and fundraising within communities, and
- Development of a personal leadership plan and strategies for implementing new ideas in current community work.

Program Outcomes

With funding from Community Action Partnership (CAP) in Lewiston, Extension co-facilitated the first LMDI in Kamiah on September 13-15, 2012. A CAP staff member and pastor served as local hosts of the institute and recruited 16 Kamiah citizens willing to invest in themselves and others to learn skills for building a better community.

A variety of methods were used to assess changes in knowledge, attitude and skills. The registration form completed one month prior allowed us to collect baseline data on what participants hoped to learn from the training and their perceptions of the characteristics of a good leader. This information allowed us to personalize the experience by emphasizing related concepts as they were presented in the training.

Reflective writing was incorporated throughout the training for introspective learning. This type of writing works well with adult learning styles because it's independent, self-selected, and self-directed.

A facilitated discussion at the end of the institute focused on what participants felt were the highlights of the training and how the training influenced their understanding of self and others in relation to leadership development. This discussion was a precursor to the formation of an Individual Leadership Plan. Participants were asked to put pen to paper and design action steps for using their leadership skills in three contexts: personal relationships, groups/organizations in which they participate, and their community as a whole.

The investment in Kamiah's human and social capital will be maintained with quarterly cohort meetings and trainings held by the local hosts for continued relationship-building and updates on progress and challenges with leadership plans. Through those meetings, LMDI instructors can provide some outside facilitation and support to assist in keeping the leadership infrastructure intact and moving forward. Investing in the development, establishment and maintenance of a leadership training program will provide Idaho's rural areas with a community leadership system of knowledgeable adult and youth leaders with increased confidence to respond, anticipate and adapt to changes in their communities.

References:

Flora, J., Flora, C. B., Bastian, S., & Manion, E. (2003). *Leadership and Community Capacity Building: An Inventory and Analysis of Curricula and Tools*, North Central Regional Center for Rural Development.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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