

Developing community leaders

Institute aims to foster skills, relationships

JOYCE EDLEFSEN

Standard Journal

REXBURG – Madison County's University of Idaho Extension educators are working to help community leaders evolve.

Educators Gale Harding and Luke Erickson are teaching and facilitating a community

leadership development course called E.V.O.L.V.E. – Extension Volunteer Organization for Leadership Vitality and Enterprise.

The training sessions are aimed at preparing leaders for Idaho's growing and changing rural communities.

Participants and instructors are drawn from the communities, and the goals of each Leadership Institute are determined by steering committees of area residents, according to a U. of I. Extension newsletter.

Successfully blending the needs and expectations of newcomers with those of longtime

residents demands skillful, effective and visionary leadership, said Ben Eborn, extension educator in Teton County. He led a seven-month class in 2005-'06 and is planning another for October.

In Madison County, Harding and Erickson launched a series of training sessions in February.

Fifteen people, mostly those already holding what would be considered leadership positions in the Madison County community, are participating in the first set of classes, Erickson said.

Classes are from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on one Wednesday a

month, with some community-based experiences encouraged in between.

The location of the classes varies. The next one, for example, will be held at the Rexburg-Madison Fire Station in Rexburg.

Last month's class title was "Effective Meetings and Time Management," and it was well received, Erickson said.

Other topics are communication and conflict resolution, leadership assessments, cultural diversity, critical thinking and generational differences,

See **Leaders** page 4A