

FOCUS

ON

Growing Strong Families

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service • Oklahoma State University
Fall 2007



In the last issue, we took a look back at the educational efforts of the Family and Consumer Sciences unit of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Our three teams, family, food & nutrition, and family finance, reported on their accomplishments during the last five-year program period.

This issue looks forward at some of the plans these teams have developed for the next five-year period. Team goals are identified as are some of the programs teams have implemented to achieve these goals. Most of us have at some time in our lives set personal goals for what we would like to achieve. We know how difficult it can be to achieve those goals. For a variety of reasons, those goals we set end up unfilled and we find ourselves back wishing and hoping.

Overall, OCES continues to work towards improving the quality of life for Oklahoma citizens. To make that occur, we have undertaken a planning process that outlines the critical needs of the state. Then working with the resources available, our teams have identified short, medium and long range goals for each time. Some of our efforts have included identifying those other entities having similar goals and then developing partnerships. These partnerships allow for greater reach and expanded programming and, bottom line, assistance to more Oklahomans.

OCES-FCS is ready to help you in all of our major areas. Maybe you want to help to build your child's social competency skills. Maybe you would like ideas on developing a better diet and being able to do so with easier and quicker. Or maybe this year you eliminate some of that debt and start a savings account. Whatever you want to do, your local county Extension office has programs to help you achieve your goal. This issue of "Focus" identifies some of the research-based programs available.

So how can you get started? Take a look at these new educational programs. Also give us a call or visit us on-line at fcs.okstate.edu to see what other programs we offer. Our goal is to bring you the best information available to help you achieve your needs. Our programs and teams are ready.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Glenn Muske'.

Glenn Muske
Interim Assistant Director
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

In This Issue –

- **Growing Strong Families: An initiative to address high risk behaviors in children and youth**
- **An Extension Impact Program of the Food, Nutrition & Health Team**
- **Feeling Financially Secure**

Growing Strong Families:

An initiative to address high risk behaviors in children and youth

Lani Vasconcellos & Nancy Dunlap, Family Resiliency Impact Team Facilitators
& Debbie Richardson, Family Resiliency State Specialist

Each year county Extension Educators meet with “Grass Root” stakeholders in their counties to identify issues that can be addressed on a county level through educational programming. Over the past two years, Extension Educators in over 20 counties across the state of Oklahoma have been gearing up to address one major issue that has been repeatedly identified by our stakeholders, “high risk behaviors in children and youth.” The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) Family Resiliency impact team has dubbed this project “Growing Strong Families” with a goal of helping children and youth to build positive social competencies such as planning, reasoning, decision making, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, resistance skills and peaceful conflict resolution skills to improve their chances for a high-quality, successful life.

The team kicked off this project in January 2007 after extensive preparation including piloting several curricula, selecting a curriculum, designing a research model, and recruiting and training Head Start and elementary school teachers to assist with the project. The curriculum selected by the team to begin this project is an innovative, research-based curriculum developed by M. B. Shure entitled *Can Problem Solve* (ICPS).

ICPS curriculum manuals are age-specific for preschoolers and primary grades. Lessons utilize a variety of methods including word concepts, pictures, role-plays, puppets, and group interaction. Previous research indicates that ICPS-trained children have shown improved positive, pro-social behaviors such as empathy for peers and reduced negative behaviors, i.e. impulsivity, impatience, over-emotionality, physical and verbal aggression, and social withdrawal (Shure, 2001).

At this point, the ICPS program has not been adapted or broadly utilized in a statewide Extension initiative such as this, and literature appears to lack evaluation of the program in rural communities. It is the intention of this OCES impact team to be able to contribute to the literature base by providing a model for implementation through Extension. Data analyses on this first phase of our project are currently underway and results will be available in 2008. Other expected benefits include:

- Participating children, teachers, and schools/preschool centers will gain new skills and resources to enhance pro-social behavior in children, improve peer and teacher-child relationships, and more effectively handle problem situations. In turn, this may reduce the likelihood of later risks or problems experienced by children.

- The evaluation will provide important information about the effectiveness of the program in impacting change and ways to enhance materials, training, or delivery of the curriculum.

Counties currently participating in the project include Beckham, Cleveland, Cotton, Craig, Garfield, Greer, Harper, Haskell, Hughes, Jackson, Kay, Kiowa, Major, McCurtain, Murray, Oklahoma, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Pushmataha, Roger Mills, Sequoyah, Tillman, and Woodward.

The Family Resiliency “Growing Strong Families” impact team has mapped out plans to continue seeking ways to provide effective educational programming addressing the issue of high risk behaviors in children and youth by building positive social competencies through the end of our program cycle in 2011. As a team of dedicated Extension professionals, finding ways to make a difference for children and families across the state of Oklahoma will remain, as always, our primary focus.

Reference:

Shure, M. B. (2001). How to think, not what to think: A problem-solving approach to prevention of early high-risk behaviors. In A. C. Bohart & D. J. Stipek (Eds.), *Constructive and destructive behavior: Implications for family, school & society*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

HEALTHY OKLAHOMA

An Extension Impact Program of the Food, Nutrition & Health Team

Recia Garcia, Team Co-Facilitator

In 2005, 45 county educators selected Food, Nutrition and Health base program area as their “impact” program and team. Working with state specialists using a deliberative process, the team selected “**Preventing Overweight & Obesity**” as their focus issue for a Federal 5-year program cycle running from 2007-2011.

State Specialists reviewed 30+ curricula for potential use in addressing overweight/obesity prevention. A Steering Committee selected 13 curricula to pilot; each curriculum was piloted in one to three sites, to determine appropriateness. Four curricula were identified for use—USDA’s Power of Choice, Healthy Kids Challenge, Jump Into Food and Fitness, and Kidnetic. Selection of curricula was guided by eight priority topics:

- **USDA MyPyramid**
- **Breakfast**
- **Healthy Snacks**
- **Portions vs. Servings**
- **Eating Out/Healthy Choices**
- **Reading Food Labels**
- **Food Safety**
- **Physical Activity**

A team-crafted Logic Model guides

program development, implementation and evaluation. **“Healthy Oklahoma”** (an educational effort) & **“Steps to a Healthy Oklahoma”** (a physical activity campaign) were chosen program names and logos were developed. Committees began working on: Curriculum Development; Evaluation; Physical Activity Campaign; Marketing and Visibility; Advisory, Coalition Building & Resource Dev.; and In-service Training.

The impact program contains both:

- **A Youth component**—3rd through 8th grade
- **An Adult component**—Adults who influence environments in which youth make nutrition and physical activity decisions (parents, teachers, coaches, cafeteria employees, etc.)

A **State Program Advisory Committee** was nominated and engaged, providing input and feedback. Each county educator engages a grassroots Program Advisory Committee and has identified formal and informal partnerships for county impact programming.

Following a pilot year and initial program year, several accomplished are reported by the team:

- **“Steps to a Healthy Oklahoma,”** a physical activity campaign was developed geared to Oklahoma PASS (Priority Academic Student Skills) Objectives with support from Pat Thompson, 4-H Coordinator & Curriculum Specialist. This also established or supported walking programs in schools.
- In 2006 a two-day conference, **“Promoting Healthy Weight in Oklahoma Children,”** was organized for 150 Extension Educators, their county & state program partners and interested professionals via leadership of Dr. Barbara Brown, Extension Food Specialist.
- Two grants were received; one provided team educational materials, also examined what made curricula effective or ineffective and identified perceived family barriers to improved nutrition and physical activity behaviors. The second grant, part of a larger Farm-to-Table program, will publish educational newsletters to statewide use.
- Eight Regional Community Forums on Oklahoma’s overweight issue gathering input from 200 citizens supporting a

U.S. Center for Disease Control grant application.

The “Healthy Oklahoma Impact Program reached 7,161 youth during the program’s Pilot Year and Year 1. Evaluation showed significant improvements in food, nutrition and physical activity behavior among youth participating in this Extension impact program. Increased intake of fruits, vegetables, and milk were found as well as increased water intake and making healthier food choices. Youth improved in using food labels and safe food handling practices.

Impact: These outcomes represent improvements in food, nutrition and physical activity behaviors which can decrease the risk of overweight related chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and certain types of cancer and food borne illness.

A website supports team members. Visit **Healthy Oklahoma** at www.fcs.okstate.edu or <http://countyext.okstate.edu/nwdistrict/FCS/Impact%20Team/impactteam1stpage.htm>.

Feeling Financially Secure

Family Economic Well-Being Impact Team
Brenda Miller, NE District Program Specialist and Team Chair

Based upon their individual work and community knowledge plus using input from local program advisory committees, and state-wide advisors, eighteen county educators have focused their efforts on improving the financial and economic well-being of Oklahoma citizens. Financial stress generated by lack of knowledge, unhealthy financial behaviors, and a fluctuating economy along with lower income levels continue to put Oklahomans at risk or already in financial difficulty.

The problems faced by individuals and families include financial insecurity, the inability to provide adequate housing and food, higher default rates and bankruptcies, high use of credit including that from credit cards, secondary lenders and pawn shops, and a general discontentment with one’s position in life. Other reflections of these financial problems are high numbers of individuals and families without health insurance, no or limited retirement planning, and a lack of emergency savings to help one through the tough times.

Based on the problems identified, the impact team continued to focus on the same goals identified during the last federal planning cycle, those of increasing savings and decreasing debt. In addition, the team added a measure of subjective well-being trying to see how education can help individuals and families feel more in control of their financial lives and thus feel better about their financial and overall well-being. The team wants to improve not only the financial literacy of Oklahoma citizens but their use of such knowledge along with supporting financial tools. The ultimate goal of the team is the enhancement of assets and feeling of financial satisfaction.

Several new curricula have been provided to team members including Money Habitudes and Dollar Decisions. In addition, three major programs continue to be upgraded and expanded.

High School Financial Planning Program

The Family Economic Well-Being Impact Team in Oklahoma has been busy spreading the news about the newly revised High School

Financial Planning Program (HSFPP). The National Endowment for Financial Education (NEFE) rolled out the new edition of HSFPP in March. Partners for the curriculum, The Cooperative Extension Service and The Credit Union National Association, are targeting a new generation of young people who need personal financial education in their lives now, more than ever.

The HSFPP, which has been available since 1984, is a seven-unit curriculum that teaches the basics of money management to young people at a time when they are developing habits and attitudes about money that will influence them for the rest of their lives. Although, Cooperative Extension has been a partner with NEFE for years, there has recently been an urgency to promote the HSFPP because of the passage of The Passport to Financial Literacy Act (HB 11476). This act requires personal financial literacy education to be taught in Oklahoma’s public schools during grades seven through twelve.

FEWB Team members have been making contacts with Oklahoma Family and Consumer Science teachers through their PI meetings to promote the program, but HSFPP can be taught in any classroom. The target

FOCUS is a publication designed to direct attention to innovative Cooperative Extension Family and Consumer Sciences programs and to share program philosophy and updates of new and changing program directions. Your comments and suggestions for topics for future issues are welcomed and appreciated. Please send all correspondence to FOCUS, Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension, 135 HES, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078. FOCUS is published three times yearly by the Family and Consumer Sciences Cooperative Extension program.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert E. Whitson, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President, Dean, and Director of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$432.15 for 470 copies. 0108 GH.

For more information about this and other Family and Consumer Sciences programs, visit our website at: <http://fcs.okstate.edu>

OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
STILLWATER, OK 74078

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

age is 11th and 12th graders. FEWB Team members are making themselves available as a resource to classroom teachers for the HSFPF.

Debtor Education

Debtor Education has been offered by team members since the educational component became a requirement for bankruptcy in 2006. Many people knew of the upcoming requirement and filed for bankruptcy prior to the inception of the requirement. Because of this, there has been a decline in the number of bankruptcies filed.

Team members are now reporting that bankruptcy filers are seeking them out for the four-hour training that meets the requirement.

It is anticipated that the number of people participating will continue to increase as people will begin filing again. The OCES curriculum is one of the few classes offered that is taught in person and not through the web. It is hoped that the credit counseling and education components will enable individuals to gain control of their finances and not file for bankruptcy a second time.

Home Buyer Education

The primary asset of many individuals continues to be the home they live in. Often this will be the largest purchase made by a family. Owning one's own home is a desire for many people. Yet finding and being able

to afford housing is a major concern for all Americans. A recent survey sponsored by the Fannie Mae Foundation found that 41% of working families consider affordable housing to be a big or fairly big problem.

Working with partners, the impact team works to expand home-buying opportunities for potential homebuyers and to, perhaps more importantly, provide them with the requisite skills and information for maintaining homeownership. Foreclosures cost the lender, the community and the consumer. Homebuyer education can provide a means for assessing the suitability of a home purchase and provide an education in the kinds of financial basics that consumers need to take