Family and Consumer Sciences in Phillips County Summary Report for 2012

Nutrition and Health

Disease prevention and increasing awareness of nutrition and fitness benchmarks for Phillips County residents of all ages continues to be a primary area of programming. Planning programs in this area revolve around Golden Plains Area programs and activities that are supported by the community.

A Matter of Balance classes were held in Haxtun and Holyoke, focusing on preventing falls among the older adults. Two Strong People classes were held in Holyoke to help the middle-aged adult continue to maintain body weight, increase strength for daily activities and prevent osteoporosis and heart disease.

A Healthier Weigh is a 12-week program designed for teams or individuals to track their fitness level with a number of steps using a pedometer. Each week participants are able to access nutrition and fitness information online. There were 50 participants in Phillips County last year, so there was great response to this type of program.

Soon after A Healthier Weigh program, Extension was a partner with the Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation for the Amateur Triathlon competition and event. Extension provided nutrition lessons for the participants and support for organizing weigh-ins. The 12 weeks of A Healthier Weigh and the eight-week session of the triathlon really gives the community an opportunity to work on and make positive changes with their health and fitness.

Nutrition and fitness education with some emphasis on diabetes education was also provided through the health fairs in both Haxtun and Holyoke in March. At the Holyoke health fair there was a diabetes educator available for individuals to come and ask personal and specific questions about their diabetes situation.

Zumba dance as a fitness opportunity has had great success as well. This summer another instructor was trained to provide classes, so Extension now offers four classes per week. Each class averages about 12-15 participants.

As a member of the wellness committee for Holyoke School District, I primarily serve as the organizer for the Walking School Bus. The committee was interested in supporting activities for students to participate in that were not school related or an extra-curricular activity.

This school year marks the second season of the Walking School Bus, a Safe Routes to School program. Every Friday for about six weeks, students met at a central location to walk to school together. Older students from various athletic teams were asked to participate as chaperones for the younger students.

Every participant, grades K-6, and all sponsors were tracked for their participation during the six weeks as part of a total distance walked competition. In the end, the fourth grade won, walking 21.2 miles as a class.

Nutrition and fitness education for the youth of Phillips County was addressed through the Phillips County Family Education Services after-school program and their summer education program. The primary focus was to educate students and parents about the principles of Chose My Plate.

Participants also were involved in trying different ways to prepare nutritious foods. The preschool age group also learned about nutrition and fitness for a day during their “health” week at school. Students were shown Chose My Plate and related the colors on the plate to the different types of foods in each food group.

They also were able to connect what we “put into our bodies” as a way to make our bodies work right. So, they also learned about the different parts of the body related to food and exercise.

During the summer, kids were able to sign up for the Kid Phit program. This six-week, one day a week, program also focused on fitness through play, nutrition principles and some type of arts and craft.

Small Steps to Health and Wealth was presented to Highline Electric Association for a two-hour worksite workshop. This program was able to meet some of the company's wellness education criteria for insurance purposes.

In addition to presenting Small Steps to Health and Wealth for all staff, the front office staff participated in an ergonomics evaluation. This process allowed for staff to analyze their office working conditions to help prevent any overuse injuries at the job site.

Some adjustments had to be made with chair height, keyboard height and distance, reaching distances, phone placement and monitor placement. The same information on ergonomics and safety was presented as part of a Worksite Wellness presentation for the Haxtun Hospital District.

Coaches from surrounding school districts participated in a Prevention and Care of Athletic Injuries Clinic at Akron High School and at the Phillips County Event Center in Holyoke. Coaches were instructed on proper taping techniques that they then practiced.

Then they reviewed signs, symptoms and treatment of common injuries and illnesses associated with athletics. Finally, coaches were able to become recertified with CPR and first aid. This was a good way for coaches to prepare for their upcoming seasons and to obtain the required credentials to be a coach.

Family finance

The third week in April, the fourth-grade classes at Holyoke Elementary and Haxtun Elementary participated in a Piggy Bank Contest to recognize April as Financial Literacy Month. Students made their own banks out of recycled materials that were judged by a panel from their school.

Awards were donated by local banks for the top three winners, as well as a little “prize” for each student participating. Teachers used educational booklets, provided by Extension, with the students to teach them about money and saving.

Parents were also asked to be involved through a letter and a pamphlet that was sent home. Teachers and students said that the activity was fun and that some were starting to save more.

Food safety

Working with the other four Extension agents in the Northeast Colorado region, materials for a Concessions Stand Food Safety curriculum were developed and released to be presented to the surrounding high schools in January of 2012. Schools are currently working to implement the curriculum to students or other individuals that will be working in the concessions stands.

Then they will present an evaluation questionnaire to the patrons of the concessions stand that will indicate if the service and safety had changed as a result of their education in the area of food safety. We are hoping to have information back from the schools this spring to determine if the materials were effective.

Youth development and outreach

This was the second school year that the After-School Enrichment Program has been offered. In Haxtun, Holyoke and now Julesburg, students are given the opportunity to try new “things” after school. Most of the projects or subjects revolve around 4-H project areas with volunteers with expertise in those areas instructing the students.

Consequently, the hope is that more students will eventually want to sign up for 4-H. Projects students have been able to sign up for included: watercolor art, cupcake decorating, sewing, leathercraft, rocketry, weaving with fabric, GPS—geocaching and robotics. Students paid a small fee to help cover equipment and material costs.

Phillips County Extension partnered with Phillips County Family Education Services to create a community calendar of summer events and opportunities. The brochure called “Holyoke Happenings” included all of the vacation Bible school dates, swimming pool hours, baseball schedules, athletic camp schedules, county fair dates and special event dates and times.

Extension was integral in forming a list of activities that students could participate in over the summer. Volunteers were called upon to teach their area of expertise to the children. Activities included Extension-sponsored or taught classes like Kid Phit, Kids Culinary Camp, Gear Tech 21, a week-long robotics and GPS course and Grow a Row for the Hungry.

Other classes that volunteers contributed to were jewelry beading, crochet, natural resources, weather, outdoor adventures and rocketry.

For the second year, the Holyoke Chamber and Extension sponsored a Kids’ Holiday at the Peerless Center in Holyoke. Kids, along with their parents if they would like, decorate a gingerbread house. Then they enjoy popcorn, candy and soft drink while they watch a Christmas movie.

All of the gingerbread houses are displayed in Sullivan’s Appliance window throughout the first part of the month of December for the community to enjoy. This is such a fun activity for everyone and a great way to spend time together.

Community development

Aside from creating partnerships within the community, being part of community development, having a more deliberate role in facilitating groups is another goal of Extension. With continued training in this area, I have been able to assist three different groups in a meeting setting.

First, I facilitated the Phillips County Fair Board on two occasions. The outcome of this facilitation was not the desired outcome, as the board was not able to then use the information that they gained from those meetings. I am in hopes that this may still be addressed in later planning sessions.

Early this fall I was able to facilitate with Kindra Plumb the 4-H leaders' meetings in both Phillips County and Sedgwick County. There were some successes with both meetings. Overall, there was discussion that made all parties realize that they can work together and that there is a common goal of good for all children involved.

Again, as I become trained and continue to attempt to use my skills, I learn more and more and look forward to how I can be more involved in community decision-making over time.

Newspaper columns and newsletters

Quarterly, the five FCS agents in the Northeast Region of the state work together to write a newsletter that is sent out to patrons in their area. In addition, I write informational articles for the newspapers in Holyoke and Haxtun about twice a month.

These articles focus on nutrition information, food safety information, recipes and financial information. As counties and as agents, we are currently working on reaching more individuals using multimedia, such as email and Facebook.

Continuing Education

This fall I was able to participate with two agents and a dietician from Wray in a class from Cornell University called “An Ecological Approach to Preventing Childhood Obesity.” We worked together as a team to identify factors within our community that can contribute to the childhood obesity problem in the area of food or nutrition and in the area of activity or fitness.

This approach made me realize that prevention entails a lot more than just educating someone about what they should be doing, like using Chose My Plate.

Next, starting at the beginning of this next year I hope to study to receive my Personal Trainers License. This type of training and credential will support my main area of fitness and health with Extension. I am really looking forward to reviewing and learning new information about an area of interest to me and then take that information for the good of the community and surrounding area.

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