

# IMPACT



Jerome County Extension, 600 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave W, Jerome, ID 83338; (208) 324-7578; FAX (208) 324-7562

## Community Partnerships Assist Local Youth

### *The Situation*

When youth feel valued and useful, research clearly shows many positive outcomes including better mental health, higher levels of moral reasoning, and more involvement in the community. One specific means for youth to feel valued is for them to have a useful role in the community, through community service and involvement. Youth who feel valued in the community have been shown to have a more positive sense of self-esteem and self-concept, a greater sense of personal control, a sense of optimism about the future, greater achievement of self-actualization' and reduced delinquency.

In a 1999 National Search Institute survey of 1,233 youth (grades 6-12) in Jerome County it was found that only 26% of the youth perceived that adults in the community value youth and that only 27% of these youth felt that they are given useful roles in the community.

### *Our Response*

Marsha Hawkins, Jerome County Extension Educator, working as facilitator for the local community based HealthNet coalition, has been addressing the issue of youth involvement in the community. The coalition is comprised of approximately 20 influential members of the community who have an interest in the welfare of youth. Over the past 2 years the coalition working in conjunction with juvenile justice, Regional Substance Abuse Authority, the 4-H program, and

various other community organizations has obtained grant funding for projects to help involve youth in community projects and decisions. In 2001, Christi Falen and Marsha Hawkins Jerome County Extension Educators working with local agencies obtained a National Garden Society materials grant to start a youth community garden.



### *Program Outcomes*

Working with juvenile probation youth, 4-H clubs, and youth and adult volunteers, the community garden was developed adjacent to the Jerome County Extension Office. The garden gave youth the opportunity to develop a bare lot into an attractive and productive site. Youth participated in landscaping, planting, weeding, and harvesting. Produce from the garden was then donated to low-

income individuals throughout the community. The garden gave youth the opportunity to learn about horticulture and to complete 4-H activities entitled "From Seeds to Salsa."



### **Participants' Responses**

When asked what they thought about the community garden project, respondents said:

- "I had never grown anything before, I did not know I could, it felt good to see things grow."
- "This was a good community service project because it helped people who needed food."
- "I cannot believe how much the garden has changed it was just a bare ugly lot when we started."

### **Cooperators and Co-Sponsors**

The community garden received a \$2,200 grant from the Regional Substance Abuse Authority for a storage shed, fence and supplies; and a grant from the National Garden Association of tools and plants. Local businesses, Moss Greenhouses, D& B Supply, Kimberly Nurseries and Walmart also donated plants and supplies to the garden project. Master gardeners, church groups, and the fairgrounds maintenance crew have also donated many hours to landscaping and assisting with building the garden site.

### **The Future**

This program has received very positive comments from all involved in the project. In May of 2002, 1436 Jerome county youth were again surveyed to see if they will show an improvement of their

perceptions of community involvement. Results of the survey showed the perception of Jerome youth as to how they were viewed by the adults in the community had improved by two percent.



### ***For More Information***

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