

# IMPACT



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## Spanish Language Classes in Valley County Are a Success

### *The Situation*

As with many counties in Idaho, Valley County's Hispanic population continues to grow. Many Hispanics are moving to Valley County following construction jobs. This trend is likely to continue, especially with a new ski resort set to start construction within the year. Local public service providers have found communication with the new residents difficult, as many of the Hispanics do not speak English and the public workers do not speak Spanish. The City of McCall police officers were becoming frustrated because many reports were not filled out properly or were illegible and had to be discarded. The police force felt it was not handling the Hispanic population properly and started looking for ways to communicate effectively with the Hispanics.

The McCall police department approached the Intermountain Regional Learning Center in McCall to see if they could provide Spanish classes. The IRLC was primarily a computer facility and not set up to deliver classes of this type. The IRLC approached Extension and asked if we could help.

### *Our Response*

After working with the IRLC to find classroom space, and an instructor, we wrote for and received Critical Issues funding. The funds would pay for classroom rent, instructor fees, curriculum costs and advertising. Through a partnership with the McCall-Donnelly school district we were able to use their Spanish classroom for a reasonable fee. This worked



out well, as we were also able to hire its Spanish teacher to instruct the classes.

It was determined that the class could provide another function of providing credits to those professionals who require credits for certificate renewal. With much work and cooperation from the Department of Foreign Languages and the College of Education Outreach, we were able to secure two credit hours for 30 hours of classroom instruction.

Fifty percent of the students indicated they worked for a public agency and 75 percent of them indicated the classes would help them communicate better with those they serve. The students range from local city government to federal employees. One state park employee indicated it is now much easier for her to communicate with the many Hispanics who come to recreate at the state parks in Valley County.

## ***Program Outcomes***

In total, 60 students completed either Spanish I or Spanish II. Because of the program, the IRLC was able to offer a spring class of Spanish I and II on its own, with no funding from the University of Idaho Critical Issues. Fifteen students obtained credit through the University of Idaho. The IRLC is offering Spanish I, II and III in McCall starting in September. Extension and the IRLC are exploring other course offerings to provide to Valley County residents. A survey will be conducted in a year to determine how much the students are using their Spanish skills in the public work place.

## ***For More Information***

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