

# IMPACT



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## Leadership Training for Rural Idaho Communities

### *The Situation*

Rural Idaho leaders frequently have limited training, time or skills for meeting the decision-making challenges they face on a daily basis. There is no established process in place to encourage, grow and support existing and emerging rural leaders as their communities face major economic, social, cultural, and environmental changes.

### *Our Response*

University of Idaho Extension Educators in Idaho and Nez Perce counties in cooperation with an Education Coordinator from the Nez Perce Tribe taught the LeadershipPlenty curriculum in Orofino and Kamiah from February through May 2005.

LeadershipPlenty is a training program developed by the Pew partnership for Civic Change for people who want to work with others to solve problems in their communities. The program offers nine highly interactive sessions that equip participants with key skills needed for community problem solving. Identifying community assets, managing conflict, planning for action, and measuring results are just a few of those skills.

Nine 2½-hour sessions of training were provided to two groups of citizens in Orofino and one group in Kamiah. During each session, opportunities were given for groups to apply new skills and techniques to existing issues in their communities. Discussing the effects of applying their newly learned leadership skills in a variety of circumstances was

the key to helping participants view their training as a valuable component of community development.



### *Program Outcomes*

A total of 86 participants attended the LeadershipPlenty training program. Self-evaluations showed that participants believed that they had significantly increased their knowledge and abilities in leadership after completing the training program. Increases in learning were reported in the areas of:

- Knowing how conflict and tension influence group work.
- Knowing the value of bringing citizens together to talk about issues.
- Knowing how partnerships influence community problem solving.
- Knowing how to plan and implement community change projects.
- Ability to work with the leadership in their organization and/or greater community.
- Ability to lead productive meetings.

- Ability to recognize leadership skills in others.
- Ability to guide discussions among diverse groups of people.

In addition, 56% of respondents attributed half or more of their current level of knowledge and understanding about leadership and community involvement to the LeadershipPlenty training they had received.

Comments from participants revealed the impact of the program. When asked what they found most beneficial about the program, replies included:

- Collaborating and listening to others and getting ideas. Most important is that everybody can be a leader.
- The awareness of how every group is made up of such a variety of people and therefore, a variety of ideals, beliefs, and desires is also present.
- Understanding other's thought process and how to discuss and communicate with others in ways that are effective and make a difference.
- Increased validation and confidence that good things can be done in communities.
- More self assuredness to convey my thoughts and get involved.

### **The Future**

The LeadershipPlenty training program will be offered in Pierce and Weippe in fall 2005. The format will be adjusted to reflect what we have learned as trainers and to meet the needs of Pierce and Weippe community members. We will continue to collect participant data to compile a comprehensive report of the impact of leadership training on rural communities in north central Idaho.

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

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