

Food and Fun Olympics

Teaching Youth about Diet and Exercise

The Situation

The migrant summer school programs in the Magic Valley are facing budget cuts and are being forced to provide services with limited funds. These summer programs provide Extension with an excellent opportunity to offer an expanded curriculum to increase cultural diversity in our youth programs and to play a vital role in educating multicultural youth (Hispanic, Bosnian, Russian, Vietnamese, and Chinese) in our communities.

Our Response

After talking with teachers from the past summer's "Gardens to Groceries" program, Extension Educators determined that a follow up on healthy eating and exercise would be beneficial. Faculty developed "Food and Fun Olympics" which consisted of four one-hour sessions. During each session, the children were given a short lesson, a hands-on learning activity, an exercise activity, and an opportunity to prepare a healthy snack. Through the different activities the students learned about the food guide pyramid, food safety, proper hand-washing techniques, how to prepare snacks, the importance of exercise and how to work as a team. Funding was provided through the remaining University of Idaho Critical Issues Funds from the "Gardens to Groceries" project.

Achievements

The "Food and Fun Olympics" program involved a team of five Extension Educators from Twin Falls,

Jerome, and Cassia counties. The program reached 257 migrant summer school pre-school through 6th graders and 17 teachers in Twin Falls, Jerome, Gooding, and Cassia counties at five schools. This program not only gave the students opportunities to learn about good nutrition and exercise, it also introduced them to new foods that were not common in their diets - foods such as yogurt, graham crackers and celery. The "Food and Fun Olympics" program has received excellent reviews from both teachers and students. Over 86 percent of the students surveyed responded that they thought the program was "Super!" Teachers comments included "fantastic", "super job," "Extend the program - we want to see you more" and, "Thank you for coming and educating children about their health - I'm sure it carries over to their parents."

The Future

University of Idaho Extension summer programs such as "Food and Fun Olympics" teach and enhance life skills for migrant summer school families. It is important to continually cultivate opportunities for children and to strengthen communities through education. Extension continues to lay a solid foundation for positive youth development through programs such as migrant summer schools. After seeing the success with these summer programs, we hope to continue similar programs in the future in cooperation with summer migrant schools and other focused audiences.

For More Information

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