

# The Communicator

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May 2004

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University of Idaho  
Extension

School of Family & Consumer Sciences

## 2004 Commencement

It's spring in Moscow and our campus is ready to host parents, relatives, and friends of the 2004 graduating class. We look forward to celebrating the achievements of our students. On Saturday, May 15, the School will graduate 55 undergraduate students and 6 graduate students. It's always a pleasure to observe the growth and professional development of our students. They will make great alumni.

## Golden I's Return

On Friday, April 30, six members of the class of 1954 returned to Moscow to celebrate their fiftieth class reunion. Alums gathered at the University Inn Best Western for lunch and then toured campus. Home Economics graduates of the class of 1954 included: Anne Fisher, Diane Knox, Linda Lewis, Mary McDonald, Nathelle Oates, and Loreen Weilmunst. What a wonderful group of strong women who created bonds among themselves that have lasted fifty years! They were an inspiration to the faculty, staff, and students who hosted a reception for the alums in the Niccolls Building.

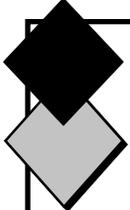


Back: Loreen Schmelzel Weilmunst, Mary Maloney McDonald, Anne Kimbrough Fisher, Nathelle Bales Oates. Front: Linda Archibald Lewis, Shirley Newcomb, Marilyn Evans Sweeney, Diane Oakley Knox.

## Kudos to FCS Specialist and Educators

Congratulations to the following UI faculty who are being recommended for promotion and/or tenure effective June 20, 2004:

**Linda Gossett** promoted to associate extension professor and extension educator, with tenure.



**Director**  
*May 2004*



Nancy Wanamaker  
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**Rhea K. Lanting** promoted to associate extension professor and extension educator, with tenure.

**Barbara Petty** promoted to associate extension professor and extension educator, with tenure.

**Martha Raidl** promoted to associate professor of Family and Consumer Sciences, with tenure.

**Shelley Thorpe** promoted to associate extension professor and extension educator, with tenure.

## Critical Issues Funding Awarded

Congratulations to Martha Raidl for her proposal entitled *Five-A-Day, the Color Way*. She will receive \$3,000 in critical issues funding.

Harriet Shaklee and the Civil Society Topic Team also received critical issues funding up to \$5,000 for their proposal entitled *Idaho's Journey for Human Rights*.

Carol Hampton, FCS Educator in Boundary County, will receive \$1,200 for her proposal, *Preserve Food @ Home: A web-based food preservation course*.

Barbara Abo was awarded \$2,300 in funding for an Idaho Youth Development Institute.

Linda Webb, 4-H Specialist in Boise, received \$1,000 in funding for her proposal for a *4-H Volunteer Core Competencies Handbook*.

We applaud your continued work on behalf of Idaho youth and families. We look forward to hearing about your progress on these projects.

## **Fletcher Recognized with UI Advising Excellence Award**

Nineteen faculty were nominated from various departments for the 2004 UI Advising Excellence Award. Janice Fletcher, professor of family and consumer sciences was one of two winners. Janice received the College Outstanding Academic Advisor Award in 1996. Janice has previously won the UI Teaching Excellence Award (1996) as well as the award for Outreach Excellence (1999). To my knowledge, no other faculty member has ever been honored with all three awards.

Janice has a record of sustained teaching success and innovation, teaching over 30 courses, including undergraduate and graduate courses, laboratory courses, and capstone courses. She has had experience developing and teaching distance-delivered courses, including satellite-delivered courses to live national audiences, full video-delivered format, combination video and we/based format, and fully web-based courses.

Janice has twenty-five years of advising experience including freshmen to graduate students, transfer students, probation and disqualified students, athletes, Honors students, returning students, and part-time students.

Janice has served as faculty advisor to student organization for department, college, and university groups. She has a record of service to the state, region, and nation through outreach to children's programs, governmental advisory boards, professional organizations, schools, and commodity groups.

We are fortunate to have Janice among our faculty in the School. We are pleased that her teaching, advising, research, and outreach efforts are recognized throughout the University.

## **FCS Faculty Honored**

Two FCS faculty were honored last month at a reception sponsored by Disability Support Services. Nominated by students with disabilities, eleven faculty across the University were Outstanding Faculty Award Recipients. These faculty members have demonstrated superior efforts in assisting students

with disabilities in providing academic support and encouragement to all students. Both Jeff Culbertson and Janice Fletcher were recognized at the reception. Jeff has a split appointment between FCS and Food Science and Toxicology. We are pleased to count these two outstanding individuals among our FCS faculty and are proud of their recognition across the UI community.

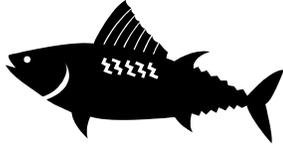
## **Summer Seminar on Youth Development**

Specialists are planning the second annual Seminar on Youth Development to be held at the UI Boise Center from 9:00 to 4:00pm on July 15. 4-H specialist Linda Webb will be presenting a session entitled, *Lessons in Leadership: How young people change their communities and themselves*. Family Development specialist Harriet Shaklee will present *Command and Control: Brain development in the teenage years*. Martha Raidl, Nutrition Education specialist, will present *Excess sugar intake + huge food portions = Increase in number of overweight and obese teens*. Family Economics specialist Marilyn Bischoff will present *Credit Card Nation: Lessons to Share with Youth and Adults*.

To register send registration form to: Lyn Crabtree, UI Boise Center, 800 Park Blvd., Ste. 200, Boise, ID 83712, [crabtree@uidaho.edu](mailto:crabtree@uidaho.edu), or 208-364-4042.

## **A Cook's Tour**

Harriet Shaklee and I are off to France on May 22 for the UI sponsored Cook's Tour. We will spend ten days exploring the food, wine and culture of Provence. We'll spend seven nights at Mas Camille, a private chateau accommodating guests in private rooms and apartments, 30 minutes from Avignon. Our itinerary includes cooking lessons with several chefs, visits with local producers of olive oil, cheese, and honey, wine tasting at the cellars of the producers, shopping in picturesque villages and guided tours of Avignon and Arles. We have already been asked to demonstrate our expertise at upcoming FCS events. We'll take lots of photos to share with all of you. Watch for our post-tour report in the next issue of *The Communicator*.



## Revised Consumer Advisory on Methylmercury in Fish

The safety of eating fish continues to be news. *The Communicator* has reported on the safety issues of eating fish with regard to mercury compounds and organo-chlorine contaminants in previous issues (February 2004, July 2003, March and April 2001), and fish safety is again in the public eye.

In March 2004, FDA and EPA revised their 2001 advisories on fish consumption, issuing a joint consumer advisory about mercury in fish and shellfish. The advice is for women who might become pregnant; women who are pregnant; nursing mothers; and young children. This new advisory differs from the 2001 advisories because it is the first time FDA and EPA have combined their advice into a single uniform source. Previously, FDA issued an advisory on consumption of commercially caught fish, while EPA issued advice on recreationally caught fish. This new advisory has also added albacore ("white") tuna to the list of fish with restricted consumption limits. This advisory emphasizes the positive benefits of eating fish and provides examples of commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury. It is reprinted below from <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html>, but the Frequently Asked Questions have been omitted.

### What You Need to Know About Mercury in Fish and Shellfish

*2004 EPA and FDA advice for women who might become pregnant, woman who are pregnant, nursing mothers, and young children.*

Fish and shellfish are an important part of a healthy diet. Fish and shellfish contain high-quality protein and other essential nutrients, are low in saturated fat, and contain omega-3 fatty acids. A well-balanced diet that includes a variety of fish and shellfish can contribute to heart health and children's proper growth and development. So, women and young children in particular should include fish or shellfish in their diets due to the many nutritional benefits.



***Food Safety***  
*May 2004*



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However, nearly all fish and shellfish contain traces of mercury. For most people, the risk from mercury by eating fish and shellfish is not a health concern. Yet, some fish and shellfish contain higher levels of mercury that may harm an unborn baby or young child's developing nervous system. The risks from mercury in fish and shellfish depend on the amount of fish and shellfish eaten and the levels of mercury in the fish and shellfish. Therefore, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are advising women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children to avoid some types of fish and eat fish and shellfish that are lower in mercury.

By following these three recommendations for selecting and eating fish or shellfish, women and young children will receive the benefits of eating fish and shellfish and be confident that they have reduced their exposure to the harmful effects of mercury.

1. Do not eat Shark, Swordfish, King Mackerel, or Tilefish because they contain high levels of mercury.
2. Eat up to 12 ounces (2 average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury.
  - Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock, and catfish.
  - Another commonly eaten fish, albacore ("white") tuna has more mercury than

canned light tuna. So, when choosing your two meals of fish and shellfish, you may eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) of albacore tuna per week.

3. Check local advisories about the safety of fish caught by family and friends in your local lakes, rivers, and coastal areas. If no advice is available, eat up to 6 ounces (one average meal) per week of fish you catch from local waters, but don't consume any other fish during that week.

Follow these same recommendations when feeding fish and shellfish to your young child, but serve smaller portions.

**Mercury Levels in Specific Types of Fish.** FDA and EPA report the mercury concentrations (parts per million) in a wide variety of commercial fish and shellfish at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html>.

Source: FDA/EPA joint websites: <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/NEW01038.html>; <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html>; <http://www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/mercury/background.html>; <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html>.

Key words: food safety, pregnancy, children, seafood.

## Potential Dangers of Mercury to Adults

The monthly newsletter, *Environmental Nutrition*, has a more restrictive opinion (as compared to FDA and EPA) of fish consumption for all adults. They have given permission to reprint the following excerpts from the March 2004 issue, as well as their chart that rates seafood safety.

**Menacing Metal, No Matter Your Age.** Mercury, a toxic metal long deemed dangerous for developing fetuses and nursing infants, is now considered a potential threat to adults as well. There is particular concern for seafood lovers who eat fish daily.

Thanks to coal-fired power plants that emit mercury, and landfills that harbor discarded mercury, the toxic metal is ubiquitous in air and water. But it's only a problem when bacteria convert it to methyl mercury (one of the most toxic forms of the

metal), which accumulates in fish (and humans) over time. While nearly all fish contain some methyl mercury, older, larger, predatory fish by far contain the most. And no food preparation or cooking method can remove it.

As a neurotoxin, mercury damages the brain and nervous system, causing confusion, depression, memory loss, and tremors. Other side effects of mercury toxicity include fatigue, hair loss, and a metallic taste in the mouth. Because mercury poisoning takes time to develop, it's more common in older people. But it can easily be missed if the symptoms are mistaken for signs of aging.

**The Mercury-Fish Link.** A recent study measured mercury in the blood of more than 100 patients in a San Francisco medical practice who displayed a variety of these symptoms and found that 89 percent had high mercury levels. The common thread? Many of these people consumed much more than 12 ounces of seafood per week. When they decreased their fish intake, mercury levels decreased and symptoms subsided or resolved.

**Disheartening Effects?** Another possible effect of mercury toxicity is an increased risk of heart disease. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University studied 1,400 men and found a significantly higher risk of heart attack in those with the highest mercury levels in their toenails, a reliable indicator of exposure. An earlier Finnish study backs up the potential for harm.

Mercury may induce the oxidation of low-density lipoproteins ("bad" LDL's), promoting clotting and increasing an inflammatory response. Ironically, the omega-3 fats found in fish provide heart-protective benefits, such as curtailing blood clotting, decreasing abnormal heart rhythms, and reducing triglyceride levels. Does this offset the danger from mercury? Partly.

The researchers also measured the men's blood levels of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—an omega-3 fatty acid—and found that high levels still lowered heart attack risk. The take-home message is to try to minimize mercury intake by choosing wisely, *not* stop eating fish altogether.

**Where's the Mercury?** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates commercial seafood,

while the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) oversees guidelines for fish caught by recreational fisherman. Mercury in fish is measured in parts per million (ppm), but safe consumption depends on a person's exposure per unit of body weight.

The FDA and EPA have long differed in their mercury standards, with the FDA considering doses up to 0.4 micrograms per kilogram (0.88 per pound) of body weight as safe. In contrast, the EPA's safe limit is 0.1 microgram per kilogram (0.22 per pound). The FDA now appears ready to go along with EPA's level.

We know the dangers from eating certain large, predatory fish, including tuna. But there is only limited data on the mercury content of other fish commonly eaten, according to Edward Groth, PhD, scientist emeritus at Consumers Union, because of cutbacks by the FDA.

Recent test data from the Mercury Policy Project reveal that mercury levels are three times higher in "white" albacore tuna than in "light" tuna, which comes from a smaller catch. Canned tuna is the most frequently eaten fish product in the US, accounting for about one-quarter to one-third of all the fish Americans eat. If you're a tuna lover, simply switching to light tuna can help cut down on your mercury exposure.

**Environmental Nutrition Rates Seafood Safety**

(Each section is listed in alphabetical order. Seafood listed in parentheses are not as environmentally friendly as the other, especially if Atlantic-caught.)

This chart has converted ppm of mercury into a safe number of fish servings for each category. In order to mix and match fish from different categories, don't exceed a weekly total of 0.5 ppm of mercury (pregnant and nursing women and young children should not exceed 0.2 ppm). A serving is three ounces.

✓=EN's Best Picks (low in mercury and PCB's, highest in omega-3's, environmentally friendly)

Choose More Often	
<b>Very Low Levels of Mercury: &lt;0.1 ppm (Three to four servings per week.)</b>	
Catfish	✓Salmon, canned or wild Alaskan
Clams	✓Sardines
Crab, king	Scallops
(Flounder)	Shrimp
Oysters	Sole
(Salmon, farmed)	Tilapia

<b>Low Levels of Mercury: 0.1 - &lt;0.2 ppm (Two to three servings per week.)</b>	
(Cod)	Mahi mahi
Crab, Dungeness and blue	Ocean perch
Haddock	✓Tuna, canned, light
✓Herring	✓Whitefish

**Choose Less Often**

<b>Medium Levels of Mercury: 0.2 - &lt;0.3 ppm (One to two servings per week.)</b>	
(Grouper)	Sablefish
(Halibut)	Sea trout
Pollock	

<b>High Levels of Mercury: 0.3 - &lt;0.7 ppm (Zero to one serving per week.)</b>	
Bluefish	(Saltwater bass)
Lobster	(Trout, freshwater)
Marlin	Tuna, fresh
(Orange roughy)	Tuna, canned, white albacore
(Red Snapper)	

<b>Risky Levels of Mercury: &gt;0.7 ppm (Avoid or no more than once a month.)</b>	
Mackerel, king	(Swordfish)
Shark	(Tilefish)

<=less than; >=more than; ppm=parts per million  
 Source for data: Food and Drug Administration, 2001-2003, and Mercury Policy Project, 2003. ©Copyright, 2004 by Environmental Nutrition, Inc., New York, NY; [www.environmentalnutrition.com](http://www.environmentalnutrition.com).

Source: Reprinted with permission ©Copyright, Antinoro, L. "Is Fish Safe to Eat? How to Avoid Mercury and Other Contaminants," *Environmental Nutrition* 27(3):1, March 2004.

Key words: food safety, pregnancy, children, seafood.



**Lead Contamination in Some Mexican Candy Products**

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is advising parents and care providers that it would be prudent to not allow children to eat Mexican candies that contain significant amounts of chili powder. An example of a chili-containing candy would be lollipops coated with chili and powdery mixtures of salt, lemon flavor, and chili seasoning.

FDA has information which indicates that candies and related products that contain significant amounts of chili powder may contain higher lead levels than other types of candy. In addition, tama-

rind, a popular Mexican candy item, can become contaminated with lead if it is sold in poorly made glazed ceramic vessels that release lead from the glaze into the candy.

The elevated lead levels in children can result in delayed mental and physical development and learning deficiencies. FDA will be working with Mexican government and industry personnel to resolve this problem, and plans to establish more stringent guidance for considering regulatory action against candy products containing lead in the near future.

Source: FDA Statement on Lead Contamination in Certain Candy Products Imported from Mexico, April 9, 2004, <http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/NEW01048.html>.

Key words: food safety, children.



## Avian Influenza and Food Safety

Avian influenza, or bird flu, has killed or prompted the cull of at least 45 million chickens and other poultry

in ten Asian countries. Although avian influenza viruses rarely infect people, the highly pathogenic avian influenza creating the problem in Asia has been responsible for 22 human deaths, as of early March. It is believed that people have contracted infection by handling live birds, raw poultry meat, and shell or raw eggs.

In February and March, a strain of low pathogenic avian influenza was identified on poultry farms in five eastern States and a highly pathogenic avian influenza strain was detected in Texas. In these US cases, the viruses are different from the strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza in Asia. Avian influenza is being controlled by culling.

Concern about bird flu is primarily because flu viruses have the potential to mutate, and those that infect birds can develop the ability to infect humans and spread from person to person. Although it is unlikely that any poultry ill with avian influenza will make it into the US food supply, proper process-

ing—that is, cooking to at least 160°F—inactivates the virus. Good hygiene practices during the handling of raw poultry also substantially lowers any potential risk.

Source: “Avian Influenza in the United States,” *Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service*, April 9, 2004, [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/ai\\_us/ai\\_us.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/ai_us/ai_us.html); “Avian influenza A(H5N1) in humans and in poultry in Asia: food safety considerations,” *World Health Organization*, January 24, 2004, <http://www.who.int/foodsafety/micro/avian1/en/>; “Questions and Answers on Avian Influenza and Risk to FDA Regulated Shell Eggs and Egg Products,” *FDA/Center for Food Safety & Applied Nutrition*, March 29, 2004, <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/avfluqa.html>.

Key words: food safety, meat and poultry, viruses.

## Food Safety Issues Affect World Meat Trade



Animal disease outbreaks and concerns, particularly Bovine Spongiform Encephalitis (BSE) and avian influenza, have reduced global meat and animal exports by about one third, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization. This could amount to approximately \$10 billion in world trade losses. Currently 12 countries are facing export bans or restraints as a result of animal health concerns.

Bans on poultry and beef imports have led to an increase in pork consumption. For example, in Japan, pork prices increased 40 percent in February 2004 following bans on United States beef and Asian poultry, according to the FAO.

Source: “Global Trade Down One-third Due to Animal Health Issues, FAO says,” *American Meat Institute*, March 4, 2004, <http://www.meatam.com/Template.cfm?Section=LastWeek&template=PressReleaseDisplay.cfm&PressReleaseID=1902&News=Y>.

Key word: food safety.

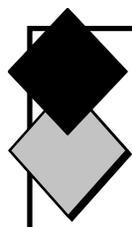
## Public Funds and Early Childhood: The Return On Public Investment In Quality Programs for Young Children

A core assumption of a capitalist economy is that markets are best at allocating resources to their most productive use without government intervention. Investors are attracted to enterprises that pay off, drawing resources away from inefficient industries to the most economically viable business activities.

However, in some cases an investment results in more good to others than to the investors themselves. This is the pattern in activities that result in a public good—i.e. something that benefits everyone. Investors will be reluctant to fund such enterprises since those who don't invest get almost as much benefit as those who do. When most of the benefit goes to the public, the investment needs to come from the public as well.

Education is an excellent case in point. All members of society benefit from the educated public, which results from a strong educational system. We rely on educated public to make informed choices in a representative government, and also to serve as a pool of qualified workers for business. For this reason, education is one of the most broadly recognized legitimate uses of public dollars, and is supported by government entities at all levels. Today over 85 percent of US children are educated in publicly funded schools.

In fact, the market return on education has grown in recent decades. Before 1983, a worker with a college degree earned about 40 percent more than one with a high school diploma. Someone with a graduate degree earned about 60 percent more. Current data show the gap to be even wider—workers with a college degree earn about 60 percent more, and those with a graduate degree earn 100 percent more than high school graduates. Wages of those with more education benefit the employees themselves, but also contribute to the public good by fueling a stronger economy for all.



*Family Development*  
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### Early Childhood and the Public Good

Recent evidence shows that sound early childhood development programs are also important for children—a sector of education only minimally funded by public dollars. However, like the K-12 system, the early childhood education system yields a public good—i.e. children in quality early care programs are more likely to succeed in school, and in the years thereafter. A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis examined the return on investment for quality early childhood programs for children, exploring the implications of their findings for public funding.

Research shows substantial long-term benefits from quality early childhood programs. For example, a recent Syracuse program provided support for disadvantaged children and their parents from before birth through age 5. Ten years later youth who experienced the program were 70 percent less likely to have criminal offenses. An early education program in North Carolina for low-income children from infancy through age 5 resulted in higher academic performance in reading and math, and fewer grade retentions and special education placements. Comparing the dollar value of benefits such as these to program costs, one preschool program for low-income children calculated that each dollar invested in the program yielded an \$8 return.

The Federal Reserve Bank study converted this index to a more commonly used measure of return on investment—i.e. real internal rate of return (“real” refers to the fact that the rate is adjusted for inflation). Their estimate of the real internal rate of return for the early childhood program was 16 percent. Some of the benefit accrued to the individuals involved, but the study estimated that 80 percent of the return was to the public, for a 12 percent real rate of return for society in general.

Compared with other investments of public money (e.g. tax breaks for office buildings, public funding of sports arenas, and convention centers), the Federal Reserve Bank analysis shows early childhood development programs to be a good buy for the public, yielding a much higher value in public return than the initial dollar investment.

Impressed with the return on public investment from early childhood programs, the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis proposed that the Minnesota state government create the Minnesota Foundation for Early Childhood Development to fill the gap in funds needed to make family education for parents of young children, school readiness, and Head Start programs available to all low income families in the state. A major outlay from government, private foundations, businesses and individuals would create an endowment, from which the interest would be used to fund high quality programs for low income families in Minnesota. According to study authors Rob Grunewald and Art Rolnick, “A dedicated program open to all poor children across the state won’t come cheap, but on the other hand, it’s only about the cost of two or three sports stadiums.”

Who would support such a scheme? To answer the question, the Federal Reserve Bank surveyed businesses about the degree of commitment the government should show to early childhood development. Overall, 55 percent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, “Ensuring that all children are ready to learn by the time they reach kindergarten should be a high government priority.” Only 24 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

According to the Federal Reserve Bank’s analysis, quality early childhood programs are an economic

investment that makes good business sense for citizens, businesses, and government. Grunewald and Rolnick suggest, “There is nothing like a budget deficit to focus attention on how a state appropriates its public funds. Suddenly, such old-fashioned economic ideas like trade-offs and opportunity cost are in vogue as public officials and citizens ask themselves the question: What is the best use of our limited resources?”

In lean economic times, government entities need to carefully evaluate where they put their resources, investing funds in the area that offers the best return to the public. According to the present analysis, quality programs for young children yield higher returns than many traditional public projects.

Source: Written by Harriet Shaklee, based on Art Rolnick & Rob Grunewald, Early Childhood Development: Economic development with a high public return. *Fedgazette*, March 2003, <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us>.

Tobias Madden & Naomi Cytron, Government’s role in early childhood development. *Fedgazette*, September 2003, <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us>.

Rob Grunewald & Art Rolnick, Early childhood development = economic development. *Fedgazette*, March 2003, <http://woodrow.mpls.frb.fed.us>.

Key words: early childhood, education.

## Facing Child Poverty in Rural America

At the end of the 1990s, one of the most prosperous decades in our country’s history, one of every five rural children was living in a family with income below the official poverty line. In raw numbers, that amounts to more than 2.6 million rural children. Millions more live just above the poverty line in families struggling to make ends meet.

In recent decades, rural poverty has been overshadowed by the plight of impoverished families living in disadvantaged urban neighborhoods. Though little public attention has focused on the plight of the rural poor, statistics indicate that rural poverty is very serious. Census 2000 provides a stark picture of child poverty in rural America,

showing that of the 50 counties with the highest child poverty rates, 48 are located in rural America.

One of the challenges in reducing child poverty in rural areas is the diversity of the rural poor. For many people, the term "urban poverty" conjures up a mental image of minority families living in disadvantaged inner city neighborhoods. In contrast, rural poverty has many faces. The following descriptions of high-poverty rural counties illustrate their racial and ethnic variety and their residents' widely different circumstances.

### **Owsley County, Kentucky**

*2000 Population: 4,858; Population Change 1990 to 2000: -3.5 percent*

Owsley is a core county of the eastern Kentucky hill country, but it was historically a small-scale farming area, not a coal-mining county. The population today is only half as large as it was in 1940. Without adequate sources of work, it has evolved into the poorest non-Hispanic white county in the country, with a child poverty rate of 56 percent and a total poverty rate of 45 percent. The median household income of \$15,800 in 1999 was less than half of the US nonmetro median of \$33,700. There is very low labor force participation—just 39 percent compared with 60 percent for all nonmetro counties nationally. More than a third (36 percent) of children in Owsley County have no working parent in the household; this is the fourth-highest rate of all the counties in the country. There is a very high incidence of disability among people ages 21 to 64 (42 percent compared with 21 percent nationally), and educational attainment is low, with 34 percent of adults having completed less than one year of high school, compared with 9 percent nationally.

### **Washington County, Maine**

*2000 Population: 43,926; Population Change 1990 to 2000: 2 percent*

Bordering Canada and the Atlantic Ocean and known as the "Sunrise Coast," Washington County contains the easternmost point of land in the United States. The county is 94 percent white. Washington County has the highest poverty rate of all nonmetro counties in the Northeast. The child poverty rate was 22 percent, and the total poverty rate was 19 percent in 1999. Median household income is

\$25,869. Over many years, jobs in the county's fishing, farming, and wood industries have declined considerably. The population level is smaller now than it was 100 years ago. Tourism brings revenue to the area in the summer—25 percent of housing stock is second homes—but many families have to piece together income from different seasonal jobs, and few retirees come so far up the Maine coast. More than half (54 percent) of the children in Washington County receive subsidized school lunches, compared with only 31 percent statewide.

### **East Carroll Parish, Louisiana**

*2000 Population: 9,421; Population Change 1990 to 2000: -3.0 percent*

East Carroll Parish, in the northeastern corner of Louisiana, is in the heart of Mississippi River Delta plantation country. The county is still highly dependent on the production of soybeans, cotton, and rice. Blacks make up 70 percent of the population. Forty-four percent of households with children under age 18 are headed by women with no husbands present, compared with 20 percent nationally. The lack of two potential breadwinners is one reason East Carroll Parish has the sixth-highest child poverty rate in the country. The labor force participation rate for males (42 percent) is not just very low, but lower than that for women—a very unusual circumstance. The child poverty rate was 59 percent, compared with an overall poverty rate of 40 percent. Median household income was just \$20,700. The incidence of overall poverty in the black population is nearly four times that of the white population—54 percent compared with 14 percent.

### **Starr County, Texas**

*2000 Population: 53,597; Population Change 1990 to 2000: 32 percent*

Starr County is in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, bordering Mexico. The county contains many colonials, where homes are often built from used or dilapidated materials and typically do not meet building codes. The population is very young, with a median age of 26 years compared with a US nonmetro average of 37 years. This age structure stems both from large families (with many children) and continued immigration. Ninety-eight percent of the population is Hispanic, with Spanish the com-

mon household language. Half of the residents report that they do not speak English very well. Formal education is low, with 46 percent of adults having finished no more than the 8th grade. The proportion of children in two-parent families is higher than normal, a condition conducive to low poverty. However, earnings are very low. Even men with full-time, year-round jobs earned an average of only \$17,500 in 1999 in the county's low-wage, agriculturally dominated economy, compared with the national average of \$30,900. Among children, 59 percent were living in households with poverty-level income. The overall poverty rate is 51 percent.

### **Liberty County, Montana**

*2000 Population: 2,158; Population Change 1990 to 2000: -6.0 percent*

Liberty County is similar to a number of other counties in the northern Great Plains states in that it is very thinly settled, has no urban area, and is almost fully dependent on agriculture. The population is non-Hispanic white, with educational levels at the US average, both for high school completion and college degrees. There is a high proportion of two-parent families. But the dependence on agriculture in an area of marginal rainfall means that incomes fluctuate from one period to another based on harvest yields and on grain and cattle prices. After several years of drought, income received in the year preceding the 2000 Census was low enough to characterize 20.3 percent of the population as poor, with the rate for children at 28.9 percent. Here and in some other counties of the northern Plains, the poverty rate is somewhat elevated in times of stress by high levels in Hutterite communities. The Hutterites, a religious group practicing communal farming, have very large families with a much higher percentage of children than in the general population, resulting in lower per capita incomes.

### **Shannon County, South Dakota**

*2000 Population: 12,466; Population Change 1990 to 2000: 26 percent*

Shannon County is the largest area of the Pine Ridge Reservation, and 95 percent of the people in the county are American Indian. Conditions are not suitable for productive agriculture, and the location is too remote for the kind of highly profitable casino business that some tribal governments have devel-

oped. In 2000, fully 60 percent of employed people worked in providing public services—education, health, social services, or government—whereas only 25 percent do so in the nonmetro United States. Nearly 18 percent of the labor force is unemployed. The median age of the population (20.8 years) is extraordinarily young, similar to that of the United States in 1880, because of high birth rates and below-average life expectancy. With an unusually high proportion of children and few earning opportunities for adults, 61 percent of all children are in families with poverty-level income. Shannon County has the fourth-highest child poverty rate in the country. Children account for fully half of all people in poverty, a rare situation; the overall poverty rate is 52 percent.

Source: Used with permission of the Population Reference Bureau. Excerpted from a forthcoming PRB report on children in rural America. O'Hare, W.P. & Johnson, K.M. January 2004. Full report at <http://www.prb.org>.

Key words: children at risk, rural, poverty.

## Low-carb Update

In the March 2004 *The Communicator*, I provided an overview of the low-carb craze. Since then, four recent news items related to low-carb diets have been published. These include: (1) FDA to define “low-carb” foods; (2) low-carb foods increase demand for laxatives; (3) low-carb diet may harm fetus; and (4) low-carb vending machines being designed.

**FDA to define low-carb foods:** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is working on criteria to define what constitutes a “low-carb” food. They are determining how many grams of carbohydrates are allowed for a food to be advertised as low-carb or reduced-carb and exactly how manufacturers should count the grams. In the meantime, food companies have set their own guidelines for what they feel constitutes a low-carb product. Once the FDA guidelines are released, some companies may have to revise their food labels. It is estimated that these guidelines will be released by summer 2004. Stay tuned.

**Low-carb diets and laxatives:** What demographic group do you think of when laxatives are marketed? Probably older individuals. The companies that manufacture laxatives have found an increased demand for their product from some individuals following the low-carb diet. That’s because this diet tends to be very low in fiber.

Companies that make fiber supplements, such as Metamucil and Citrucel, are showing how their products fit into a low-carb diet. Ads promoting Metamucil, state “Stay regular. The 0 net carb way.” Magazine ads have promoted Citrucel as “helping you get back on track.”

**Low-carb diets may harm fetus:** How could following a low-carb diet harm a fetus? Foods that are avoided on a low-carb diet such as bread, pasta, breakfast cereals, and orange juice, are excellent sources of folic acid, a micronutrient essential to the neurological development of fetus. The medical director of the March of Dimes, a group that works to prevent birth defects, stated “We’re really beginning to worry about the popularity of low-carb diets but, at this point, we just don’t know what the impact is going to be.”

## Nutrition Education

May 2004

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**Low-carb vending machines:** Currently most vending machines contain products high in carbohydrates—potato chips, cookies, and candy bars. However, Pure Foods LLC recently announced that it will have the “first low-carb vending machine” in the United States. It will contain 17 low carb snacks and eight low-carb beverages.

Source: [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov); [www.citrucel.com](http://www.citrucel.com);  
[www.metamucil.com](http://www.metamucil.com); [www.bizjournals.com/losangeles/stories/2004/03/01/daily48.html](http://www.bizjournals.com/losangeles/stories/2004/03/01/daily48.html).

Key word: fad diet.

## Food Ads and Childhood Obesity

In the April 2004 *The Communicator*, I discussed the relationship between food ads and childhood obesity that were described in two reports; the first from the American Psychological Association and the second from the Kaiser Family Foundation. Other groups such as the American Academy of Pediatrics and Stop Commercial Exploitation of Children have petitioned the Federal Trade Commission to review marketing to children. It is estimated that companies spend \$15 billion a year on marketing to children.

According to Susan Linn, a psychiatry instructor at Harvard Medical School, “We think it’s time for the government to take a real hard look at the industry’s practices.”

Currently, the Federal Communications Commission enforces the 1990 Children’s Television Act, which limits ads on children’s programs to no more than 10.5 minutes per half hour on weekends and 12 minutes per hour on weekdays. Changing these limits would require Congress to enact a law or have the Federal Trade Commission change their administrative rules, which would probably be opposed by advertisers.

A study published in October 27, 1999 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* was the first to suggest a relationship between weight gain and TV watching. Lead author, Dr. Tom Robinson, studied 200 third and fourth-graders for seven months and found that those children who watched more TV and gained more weight consumed on average one or more of their meals in front of the TV each day.

Source: [www.aap.org/family/tv1.htm](http://www.aap.org/family/tv1.htm); <http://jama.ama-assn.org>; <http://www.chicagotribune.com/business/bal-ads032904,1,5801603,print.story>.

Key words: children, obesity.

## Portion Sizes

Three studies recently focused on the influence of portion sizes on the amount of food consumed. The first two studies found that increasing portion sizes of pasta and sandwiches resulted in people eating significantly more. The first study published in the March 2004 issue of *Obesity Research* studied individuals in a cafeteria and found that those who chose a large portion of pasta ate significantly more (160 kcal) pasta plus significantly more calories from their entrée (172 kcal) than those who chose regular sized pasta portions. The second study published in the March 2004 issue of the *Journal of American Dietetic Association* found that portion size of a sandwich influenced how much a person eats. Women participants who were served a 12-inch sandwich ate 12 percent more calories (74

kcal) and male participants ate 23 percent more calories (186 kcal) compared to participants who were served an 8-inch sandwich.

The third study also published in the March 2004 issue of *Obesity Research* discussed how portion controlled entrees could be used to control food intake and result in weight loss. Subjects in this study consumed two frozen entrees daily, plus additional food servings from the Food Guide Pyramid. At the end of six weeks, these subjects had lost significantly more weight (5.6 kg) and more fat (3.6 percent body fat), compared to the control group which was put on a similar calorie diet.

Source: [www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/3/538](http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/3/538); [www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/3/562](http://www.obesityresearch.org/cgi/content/abstract/12/3/562); [www.ada.journal](http://www.ada.journal).

Key word: diet.

## Exercise to Music

If you want to improve your brainpower, try listening to music when you exercise. Psychologist Charles Emery studied 33 men and women who took part in a cardiac rehabilitation program. The participants said that they felt better emotionally and mentally after they walked on the treadmill with or without music. But their verbal fluency doubled if they listened to music while they were on the treadmill.

Emery stated, “exercise seems to cause positive changes in the nervous system, and these changes may have a direct effect on cognitive ability. Listening to music may influence cognitive function through different pathways in the brain.”

For this study, Emery chose the music, which was Vivaldi’s “The Four Seasons.” This was selected because of its moderate tempo and positive effects on medical patients in previous research. For his next study, Emery will let people choose their own music. This study was published in the December 2003 issue of the journal, *Heart & Lung*.

Source: [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com).

Key word: exercise.

## The Importance of Emergency Savings

Many Idaho participants of *Dollar Decision\$* classes report that the program introduced them to the concept of an “emergency savings fund.” Most class participants had no previous education about savings and didn’t know that emergency savings should be established before saving for long-term goals.

Emergency savings may be the most important difference between those who stay afloat and those who are sinking financially. That’s because maintaining emergency savings of \$500 to \$1,000 or more allows you to easily meet unexpected financial challenges such as:

- Repairing your car.
- Paying for a visit to the doctor when your child has the flu.
- Flying to visit a sick parent.
- Replacing a refrigerator that stopped working.

An emergency fund not only allows you to cover these expenses, it also gives you the “peace of mind” that you can afford these types of financial emergencies. People who don’t have an emergency fund are more likely to borrow too much money at high interest rates. For example, Americans with emergency savings probably would not have to take out \$2 billion a year in payday loans at interest rates that average 300 to 500 percent.

### Where to Keep Emergency Savings

It’s usually best to keep emergency savings in a bank or credit union savings account. These types of accounts offer easier access to your money than certificates of deposit (CDs), US Savings Bonds, or mutual funds. Money placed in a savings account (rather than checking) is less likely to be used for everyday, non-emergency expenses. You may need at least \$100 to open a savings account and a \$200 minimum monthly balance to avoid monthly fees. However, there are some financial institutions with lower minimums. And some banks and credit unions may waive fees if you have other accounts at that institution.

Source: America Saves Campaign, Winter 2004, *American Saver* newsletter.

Key word: savings.

## Family Economics

May 2004

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## How to Find Money to Save

There are many places to find money to save. Start with the loose change that you accumulate. Americans typically save more than \$100 in loose change each year. Use this change to open and grow a savings account.



If you received a tax refund or Earned Income Tax Credit, use a portion of this money to begin or increase savings. Since the Tax Credits average nearly \$2,000, you may be able to open a savings account and still have money to pay off debts or cover other expenses.

Try to deposit money saved by cutting back on small, unnecessary expenses. Some ideas include packing a lunch, switching from daily lattes to daily coffee, not bouncing checks, and borrowing videos from the library instead of renting them. One of our *Dollar Decision\$* class participants told us, “Before making a purchase, I think of how many hours I have to work to purchase an item. For example, I make \$10 an hour. If I want to purchase an \$80 jacket, I know I have to work eight hours to pay for the jacket. I have talked myself out of many purchases by thinking of the number of hours I must work to purchase an item.”

Building savings may be easier if you involve the whole family in meeting this challenge. After you've explained the importance of emergency savings to your spouse or children, they may even help build the account. And they will be more likely to understand why it's more important for you to increase savings than to pay for expensive gifts at birthdays or Christmas.

Another way to accumulate money for savings is to ask your bank or credit union to automatically transfer funds from checking to savings monthly. Automatic savings is the easiest savings. What you don't see, you'll never miss.

Source: America Saves Campaign, Winter 2004, American Saver newsletter.

Key word: savings.

## Teens and Summer Jobs

Having a job helps your teen prepare for adult life. It teaches them responsibility, gives them work experience, puts money in their pocket and keeps them off the streets. Work habits formed as a teenager follow them the rest of their lives. Some kids naturally want to work, others need encouragement. A summer job can teach teens what it's like to earn his or her own money.

During the summer teens ages 14 and older can work 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week in Idaho. Younger teens can do odd jobs such as running errands, baby-sitting, dog walking, or lawn mowing.

Many teens work to provide spending money. They overlook the added benefits of job experience and seeing what adult life is like. Even a fast-food job can give teens transferable skills such as handling money, using a computer system, and dealing with customers. No job is dead end if you know how to market yourself.

Familiarize your teen with job hunting tools. Go over the basics of resume writing—there are many internet sites and books on the subject. Gather some job applications from local businesses and review the information they ask for. Read help wanted ads in the local newspaper. By role-playing

a call to a potential employer or a job interview, parents can raise their child's comfort level for the real deal.

Discuss some of the often overlooked traits that please employers, such as neat grooming and dress, politeness, being on time, doing what you're told, paying attention, and asking questions if you don't understand.

Urge your teen to start looking for a job early, instead of waiting until late May or June when positions may be scarce. Rather than dropping off an application, suggest they ask when the manager has time to meet with them. Many teens want jobs they consider cool; they may have blinders on about available jobs. Brainstorm together about possible jobs. Depending on their interests, teens may find employment as camp counselors, tutors, tour guides, lifeguards, receptionists, landscapers, day care workers, construction crew members, maintenance workers, sales help, and library aides.

Source: *Consumer Action*, 2003, Talking to Teens About Money.

Key words: teenagers, employment, youth financial literacy.

## Tips for Saving Fuel

With gas prices approaching \$2.00 per gallon, drivers can benefit from many different strategies to save fuel. The following tips will help you go farther for less money:



**No loitering.** Don't let the engine run at idle any longer than necessary. After starting the car in the morning, begin driving right away; don't let it sit and "warm up" for several minutes. An engine actually warms up faster while driving. With most gasoline engines, it's more efficient to turn off the engine than to idle for any longer than 30 seconds.

**Easy does it.** Driving smoothly and steadily makes the best use of your fuel. If you can, avoid hard acceleration or braking. Once up to speed, maintain a steady pace in top gear. Varying your speed a lot wastes fuel. A vehicle's gas mileage decreases

rapidly at speeds above 60 mph. Smooth acceleration, cornering, and braking not only saves fuel but also extends the life of the engine, transmission, brakes, and tires.

**It's a drag.** At highway speeds, more than 50 percent of engine power goes to overcoming aerodynamic drag. Try not to add to the drag by carrying things on top of your vehicle. A loaded roof rack can decrease a car's fuel efficiency by 5 percent. Even driving with empty ski racks wastes gas. In addition, if you have air conditioning, use it only when you really need it. Running the air conditioner robs power from the engine and uses additional fuel.

**Stay warm.** An engine runs most inefficiently when it's cold. It not only uses more fuel but also creates the most exhaust emissions and suffers the most wear. Avoid many short, separate trips—and unnecessary cold starts—by combining as many errands as possible into one trip.

**Getting regular.** If your car specifies regular fuel, don't buy premium under the mistaken belief that your engine will benefit. Most cars are designed to run just fine on regular gasoline. Furthermore, many cars that recommend premium fuel also run well on regular. Check your owner's manual to find out if your engine is designed to handle either grade. And consider buying off-brand gasoline, which is most often identical to what is sold at franchised gas stations.

**Watch the tires.** Keep your tires properly inflated. Underinflated tires require more energy to roll, which not only wastes fuel but also wears the tires faster. According to the EPA, a tire that is underinflated by only 2 pounds per square inch can cause a 1 percent increase in fuel consumption. Underinflated tires can also build up excess heat, which can lead to tire failure. Check your vehicles tire pressures at least once a month, when the tires are cold. Also, check the tires before and after long road trips. The recommended tire pressure is found on a label inside the car—usually in a doorjamb or inside the glove-box lid.

**Stay tuned.** The fuel consumption that's posted on new-car window stickers is based on a well-tuned and properly maintained vehicle. Running a car in

subpar mechanical condition can dramatically lower that figure. A poorly maintained engine can cut gas mileage by 10 to 20 percent. A clogged air filter alone can cause up to a 10 percent increase in fuel consumption. Be sure to follow the maintenance schedule in your owner's manual, and act promptly if you sense any unusual sounds, smells, or vibrations.

Source: *Consumer Reports*, April 2004, <http://www.consumerreports.org/main/detail4.jsp?WebLogicSession>.

Key words: vehicles, conservation, savings, spending.

## Idaho Family Economics Education— Summary of Programming

### Financial Security in Later Life

Financial Security in Later Life is a five-year USDA national initiative begun in 2002. Idaho Financial Security in Later Life (FSL) programming was introduced to county FCS educators during a November 2002 in-service training. In fifteen months five Extension FCS educators and the Family Economics specialist taught 30 classes, seminars or workshops, reaching approximately 1,025 Idaho residents. Programs included: Legal Check-up seminars, Long Term Care workshops, Distribution of Untitled Property: Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate classes, and Worksite Retirement and Savings classes. Some of the documented participant outcomes include:

**Legal Check-up seminars.** End-of-class evaluations completed by 300 SW Idaho participants indicate:

- 98% increased knowledge of how to strengthen their legal health.
- 95% of participants felt they benefited emotionally (peace of mind) and/or financially from the program.
- 87% reported that they will share this information with others.
- 80% began to take legal action as a result of attending Legal Checkup seminars including:
  - 70% draft/revise will and/or trust.
  - 64% draft/revise power-of-attorney and/or health care power-of-attorney.
  - 58% draft/revise living will.

**Long Term Care Workshops.** End-of-class evaluations returned by 68 participants of Lewiston and Grangeville workshops conducted during April 2004 indicate:

- 94% became more aware of long term care issues.
- 91% became more aware of long term care options.
- 90% felt the information gained will be useful to themselves and their families.
- 89% gained new resources to help them make long term care decisions.

Participants reported they will take the following actions as a result attending the Long Term Care workshop:

- 90% will review the publications they received.
- 74% will share the information they gained with a family member or friend.
- 47% will review their financial assets to determine how they will pay for long term care.
- 46% will determine the type of long term care they prefer, in case it's needed, and will discuss their preferences with a family member or friend.

The Legal Check-up and Long Term Care programs were featured in a USDA videoconference down-linked to 240 sites in 41 states. In-kind donations of nearly \$30,000 from five organizations supported several of our programs. Extension faculty authored five publications and 15 newsletter articles explaining later life financial issues. Idaho FSSL educational programs were featured in three major daily newspapers.

Idaho FCS Educators who reported Financial Security in Later Life programs include: Carol Hampton, Boundary County, [champton@uidaho.edu](mailto:champton@uidaho.edu); Marsha Hawkins, Jerome County, [mhawkins@uidaho.edu](mailto:mhawkins@uidaho.edu); Beverly Healy, Ada County, [bhealy@uidaho.edu](mailto:bhealy@uidaho.edu); Kathee Tiff, Nez Perce County, [ktiff@uidaho.edu](mailto:ktiff@uidaho.edu); Julia Welch, Idaho County, [jwelch@uidaho.edu](mailto:jwelch@uidaho.edu).

The next edition of *The Communicator* will feature Idaho's "Basic Financial Management" and "Youth Financial Literacy" 2003 Report Summary.

## Family Economics 2004 Calendar

May 1. UI Extension/AARP-Idaho Long Term Care Workshop. Coeur d'Alene. Contact Julia Welch, [jwelch@uidaho.edu](mailto:jwelch@uidaho.edu) or Carol Hampton, [champton@uidaho.edu](mailto:champton@uidaho.edu) for information.

May 8. UI Extension/AARP-Idaho Long Term Care Workshop. Twin Falls Senior Center. Contact Marsha Hawkins, [mhawkins@uidaho.edu](mailto:mhawkins@uidaho.edu) for information.

May 21. UI Extension/AARP-Idaho Long Term Care Workshop. Red Lion Hotel, Idaho Falls. Contact Barbara Petty, [bpetty@uidaho.edu](mailto:bpetty@uidaho.edu) for information.

June 27-30. Idaho Professional-Technical Educator's Conference. Boise. Contact Nancy Walker for information, [nwalker@pte.state.id.us](mailto:nwalker@pte.state.id.us).

July 14. University of Idaho Summer Seminar on Youth Development. University of Idaho Extension-Boise Center. Contact Harriet Shaklee, [hshaklee@uidaho.edu](mailto:hshaklee@uidaho.edu) or Linda Webb, [lwebb@uidaho.edu](mailto:lwebb@uidaho.edu) for information.

August 4. High School Financial Planning Program Teacher's In-service. Sponsored by University of Idaho Extension, Capitol Educator's Credit Union, and the Idaho Credit Union League. Contact Marilyn Bischoff, [mbischof@uidaho.edu](mailto:mbischof@uidaho.edu) for information.

September 14-16. Governor's Conference on Aging. Doubletree Riverside Hotel, Boise. Contact Marilyn Bischoff, [mbischof@uidaho.edu](mailto:mbischof@uidaho.edu) for information.

September 22-24. University of Idaho Extension FCS In-Service. Moscow. Contact Sandy McCurdy, [smccurdy@uidaho.edu](mailto:smccurdy@uidaho.edu) for information.

Association for Financial Counseling and Planning Education Conference, November 17-20, 2004, Denver, CO. Contact Marilyn Bischoff, [mbischof@uidaho.edu](mailto:mbischof@uidaho.edu) for information.