

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Eat Smart Idaho supports Juntos Family Engagement with healthy meal kits

### AT A GLANCE

Juntos™ Family Engagement drive-through events held in place of in-person workshops encouraged making education a family goal with the support from Eat Smart Idaho and healthy meal kits “to-go.”

### The Situation

In Idaho, 13% of the population is Latinx and growing. Latinx residents make up 36.5% of the population of the City of Jerome with Latinx students comprising 50% of the student body at Jerome High School. Community assessments show that Latinx families want support for their children in the areas of academic success with a focus on college and career readiness. Juntos™ is a program that helps Latino students achieve high school graduation and attend higher education. Due to USDA/NIFA funding allocated through the Children, Youth and Families at Risk (CYFAR) grant program has allowed UI Extension, Jerome County to partner with North Carolina State University to offer Juntos.

The four components of Juntos include Family Engagement, 4-H Clubs, One-On-One Success Coaching and Summer Programming. Family engagement workshops encourage family and school communication with a focus on making education a family goal. Because family involvement positively impacts students' academic success, it has been important to find creative ways to support our Juntos students and families during the pandemic. Due to COVID guidelines, family engagement workshops were redesigned with safety



Juntos Program Coordinator Eduardo Reyes distributes healthy meal kits to a Juntos family in Jerome County.

protocols in mind. In partnership with University of Idaho Extension's Eat Smart Idaho, healthy meal kits “to go” along with family communication activities were distributed during drive-through events for Juntos families in place of in-person family engagement workshops.

### Our Response

As a strategy to maintain the academic success of our Juntos students and to safely support our Juntos families during the pandemic, Juntos in Jerome County partnered with Eat Smart Idaho to develop healthy and food safe meal kits “to-go.” Meal kits were distributed during drive-through family engagement events taking the place of in-person workshops. This creative solution provided families quick, nutritious and

colorful take home meals. For example, the first meal kit included ingredients from an Eat Smart Idaho recipe card for Cowboy Caviar. This recipe calls to gently combine fresh avocado, green onion and lime with canned corn, black beans, kidney beans, diced tomatoes and diced green chiles served with tortilla chips. Along with the meal kit, each family received an activity kit focused on family communication with supplies to create a family nametag that best represents them. The drive-up events allowed coordinators and families a moment to safely interact, discuss concerns, share successes and feel a part of the group.



Example - Family activity kit supplies and meal kit ingredients.

## Program Outcomes

The Juntos program in Jerome County served 81 students from eighth to 12 grade and 75 families during the 2020-2021 school year. Ten of these students opted for online learning during the year. While Juntos hosted five family engagement events during the school year, three of the events were drive-up due to safety changes made for in-person gatherings. Overall, 25 Juntos families and 32 Juntos youth participated in the drive-through family engagement events in the

spring of 2021. Despite pandemic challenges, Juntos coordinators continued to be resourceful in keeping youth and families engaged in the academic process.

Juntos parent quote:

“It is a very beneficial program because it has motivated my daughter to continue her education after high school.”

## The Future

As the 2021-2022 school year begins, we look forward to supporting our Latinx families with in-person family engagement workshops and seeing the first cohort of Juntos scholars graduating with the Jerome High School Senior Class of 2022. With the continued support from partners, Juntos Jerome County will continue to support our Latinx youth and their families by making education a family goal.

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- This CYFAR program is funded by USDA/NIFA
- Jerome School District #261
- North Carolina State University
- Eat Smart Idaho, University of Idaho Extension program
- Juntos

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