

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

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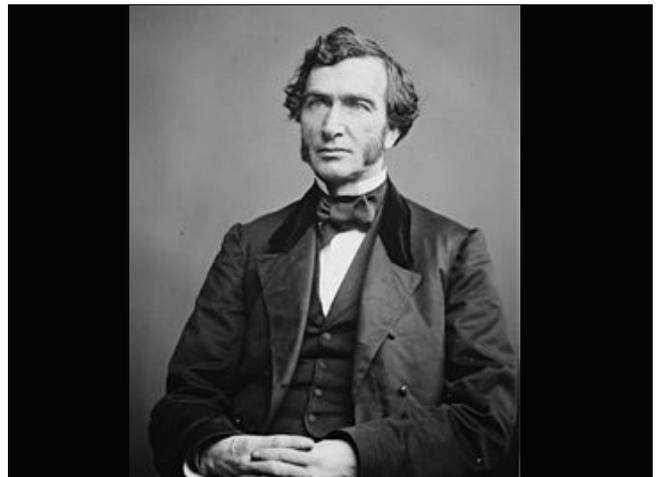
Increasing knowledge of Extension among community leaders

The Situation

Community leaders in Clearwater County, particularly those who were not the “traditional” clientele of Extension, lacked knowledge of Extension, and what its purpose was in the community. In a meeting with the Clearwater County Economic Development Board, board members confessed a lack of knowledge of Extension, and wanted to know more. They also expressed a desire for a presentation on Extension for community leaders. As an example of this knowledge gap, a member of the board who was a prominent business person in the community and a former mayor, said that all they knew of Extension was the character on the 1960’s sitcom “Green Acres.”

Although some members of the public who were involved with 4-H knew something about Extension (although some of these did not have much awareness of what else Extension did other than 4-H), along with forest landowners and forest agency personnel who participated in the Extension forestry program over the years. Many community leaders, and particularly those involved in community and economic development endeavors, seemed to know little or nothing about Extension, or how it differed from other “extension” efforts, such as the Lewis Clark State College facility in Orofino.

This lack of awareness was seen as a detriment in two ways. One, community leaders and others who were unaware of Extension services and rural development resources could not take advantage of them. Second, this lack of awareness presented an obstacle for developing a community development initiative in the county, given the lack of understanding of Extension’s role. This latter issue was highlighted in interviews with some economic development profes-



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sionals, who did not understand why Extension would be interested in community development.

Finally, lack of knowledge of Extension’s services is seen as a national problem as well, and was a major topic of development at the Annual Extension Conference in Boise in 2012.

Our Response

Clearwater County Extension developed a PowerPoint presentation on the history and mission of Extension, as well as the major programs and organization of Extension at the national, state, and county level. This presentation was given to four civic groups in Clearwater County in 2012—Orofino Rotary, Orofino Kiwanis, the Clearwater County Human Needs Council, and the Clearwater County Chapter of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees.

These programs were evaluated with a post presentation assessment of knowledge gained, as well as a survey on what programs and services the audience was most interested in from Extension. This latter assessment was used as a way of broadening the reach of the needs assessment conducted in Clearwater County in 2012.

Program Outcomes

The presentation on Extension was given to approximately 57 people. Of those completing the post-presentation evaluation, the average gain in knowledge over the four programs was 45%, with several people reporting 75 and 100% gains in knowledge.

In addition, survey responses on what types of Extension programs and services were most important were received from most of the attendees.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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