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POVERTY IN IDAHO

THE GREAT RECESSION TOOK ITS TOLL ON IDAHO. THE NUMBER OF IDAHOANS LIVING AT OR BELOW THE POVERTY LINE GREW TO 249,245 IN 2013, A 40 PERCENT INCREASE FROM 177,806 IN 2008.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Eat Smart Idaho nutrition education improves lives of those at or below the poverty line

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U.S. CENSUS STATISTICS show 40 percent more Idahoans, nearly 250,000 in all, lived below the poverty line in 2013 compared with five years earlier.

Through its Eat Smart Idaho program, University of Idaho Extension provides nutrition education and related food buying and meal planning information for low-income families through its network of 28 nutrition advisors who teach classes for adults and youth in 39 counties.

Classes at emergency food sites, food stamp offices, adult rehabilitation centers, public housing sites and schools reach those in need.

Idaho will save \$14.55 in future health care costs for every \$1 invested in healthy living education through Eat Smart Idaho, according to a study of program graduates.

In 2013, a total of nearly 6,000 adults and 13,000 children received at least one class from Eat Smart Idaho. With 2,800 adults graduating from the series of four basic classes, health care savings add up to a projected \$1.7 million over the next five years.

They learned to shop, plan meals, develop healthy eating habits, and add physical activity.

Families living below the poverty line face many challenges, including hungry children's performance in school, child care and financial flexibility.

Eat Smart Idaho incorporates the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and partners with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to deliver the SNAP-Ed program. Both are funded by U.S. Department of Agriculture grants.

Grant helps expand youth financial literacy

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UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO EXTENSION EDUCATORS have led efforts to help 40,000 young people learn about personal finances and credit in recent years without learning the lessons the hard way by running up debt.

Northwest Farm Credit Services recently committed \$280,000 to a four-year project to help expand those efforts to four more states to improve youth financial literacy and economic prospects for rural communities.

UI Extension educators Luke Erickson of Rexburg and Lyle Hansen of Jerome will lead the effort. They presented their popular program "Credit Score Millionaire" at this year's Spokane Ag Expo.

Through innovative programs developed for the UI Extension 4-H Youth Development program, Erickson and Hansen give young people

the chance to experiment with credit cards and budgeting. The programs have helped school teachers and others prepare students to manage their personal finances.

Dynamic, engaging speakers, Erickson and Hansen help young people learn to become financially literate through practical, fun exercises that deliver some serious messages.

Young people will learn the consequences of buying "must-have" accessories like consumer electronics and others on credit, then being responsible for interest and payments.

"Today's youth have a lot of challenges when you think about car costs and college costs. They're going to be paying a lot more than their parents did," Hansen said. "We need to help them prepare for all the costs ahead so they can be successful financially."

UI Extension offers drought info website

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WITH WATER SUPPLIES ACROSS SOUTHERN IDAHO SCARCE, University of Idaho Extension is compiling new and existing resources to help agricultural producers and others conserve water this year.

"We're gathering together information about how we've conserved water during past droughts and we're adding some new information," said Steve Hines, UI Extension educator/crops who is based in Jerome County.

A new website with links to resources developed by UI Extension or from other government sites is online at www.uidaho.edu/extension/drought.

Much of the information is about best irrigation practices and crops' individual water requirements. Much is tried and true because it was tested during past droughts, Hines said.

"We've used this information successfully in past years to conserve water supplies," Hines said. "Some information is new, because technologies like sprinklers and tillage practices have been improved in recent years."

Interest in reducing the amount of tillage, whether no-till, minimum tillage or strip tillage, is gaining momentum in southern Idaho in particular. Already well known in northern Idaho and rain-fed agricultural systems, reducing tillage can bring many benefits, Hines said.