



## Community Development

### Training rural Idaho for success

Why do some small towns thrive while others dry up and blow away? Research shows that survival and success for many small towns depend on whether a community shares a vision, and whether its citizens are willing to work together to breathe life into that vision.

How can that happen? UI College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALs) rural development faculty are working with three north central Idaho communities—Orofino, Elk River, and Kamiah—to develop both a vision and the leadership skills to make their visions happen.

Funded by a \$350,000 Horizons Leadership Program grant from the Northwest Area Foundation, UI Extension educators hired David Beurle, an Australian community development specialist, to spend several days in each community. He shared ingredients for successful small communities with each town's students, civic leaders, and interested community members. In each town, he also led a "visioning" session, helping residents agree on a shared vision based on each community's strengths.

Orofino residents want to lure anglers and other visitors to the steelhead capital of the world. Kamiah residents see a future that builds on their natural beauty and cultural riches. Elk River residents say their town is a fun and interesting place offering authentic outdoor experiences.

Now through June the grant funds leadership training for volunteers of all ages in each community. "The communities are ready and the volunteer planning committees are taking responsibility for the outcomes," said Ken Cohen, Horizons Program coach at UI in Moscow.

Idaho's towns are among 36 selected by the foundation to participate in the pilot Horizons program, whose goal is to help citizens reverse economic and population declines. Grant support will continue through 2005.

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### UI CALS helps Idaho's small businesses thrive, write their own business plans

The U.S. Small Business Administration reports 96.9 percent of all Idaho businesses are small, with fewer than 500 employees (2003 figures). They're also vulnerable: 17 percent went out of business in 2002.

To help entrepreneurs succeed, UI Extension educators offer business planning courses throughout the state. Lasting 10 to 15 weeks and 30 to 45 hours, they cover planning and research, writing business plans, management, legal structures, marketing, cash flow and budget analysis,

interpreting financial statements, and financing strategies. Briefer workshops also are offered to both high school students and adults.

Classes are underway this month in Twin Falls, Plummer, and Kamiah. In 2004, business-planning classes served 80 people in Bonner, Boundary, Benewah, Latah, and Valley counties. Teaching the UI program the most times is UI Extension Educator Sarah Howe in Bonners Ferry.

Contact her at [sarahs@uidaho.edu](mailto:sarahs@uidaho.edu).

## DID YOU KNOW?

**35** COUNTIES in Idaho have 10 to 18% of their residents living below the poverty level.

\*Source: Northwest Area Foundation Indicator Website, 2002 data

### UI after-school program success helps 44 new efforts in Idaho

Keeping rural children engaged in constructive activities after school is a critical issue throughout Idaho, which is why Idaho's Department of Education has spent federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grants to fund 44 new after-school programs in small towns with high poverty rates.

Lessons learned at six pilot Idaho County programs, for kids in grades 1 through 8, are helping newer programs succeed. The veteran programs, now in their fifth year—launched by UI Extension Rural Development Specialist Mary Schmidt of Grangeville—continue to reap impressive results. They are in Cottonwood, Elk City, Grangeville, Kamiah, Kooskia, and Riggins.

The next goal is making sure all programs are sustainable after grant monies run out in 2008. The Idaho Department of Education is working with Schmidt to help establish and prepare community-based boards to take over that task.

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