

## COMMUNITIES—UI Horizons program expands to help southern Idaho combat poverty

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HORIZONS, the University of Idaho Extension program that successfully helped northern Idaho communities rev up citizen leadership as a way to combat poverty, is working to achieve the same goals in 15 southern Idaho communities. Some communities unite two or three small towns.

UI Extension and the Northwest Area Foundation (NWAFF) launched the program last summer in Albion, American Falls, Arco, Ashton, Challis, Dietrich, Eden, Georgetown, Hazelton, Heyburn, Lava Hot Springs, Menan, Moore, Richfield, Ririe, Roberts, Salmon, and Shoshone.

**To qualify**, towns need populations of 5,000 or less, and poverty rates above 10%. Funded by a \$1 million NWAFF grant, Horizons offers small towns tools they need to encourage community conversations and expand leadership capacity to help all residents thrive.

Southern Idaho's Horizons communities follow the same process used successfully elsewhere in Idaho and in the eight states served by the foundation.

**How Horizons works:** In each participating community, residents gather in study circles to talk about issues facing their own town and how poverty—whether the lack of money or access to resources or leadership—limits their chances for prosperity.

More than 750 residents joined in those conversations, said Barbara Petty, UI Horizons project director at Idaho Falls, adding, "It's been going extremely well." Next the program trained three people in each community to become leadership trainers themselves, giving these individuals skills they can use locally now and in the future. Community visioning rallies this spring will help residents identify goals for Horizons activities during the next year and further develop leaders and ways for the communities to reach those goals.

"Communities are already doing things to reduce poverty by putting together resource directories to help people, and one held a silent auction to help a mother fighting cancer," Petty said. Others created a suggestion box for residents and visitors to share input about ways the community could be improved, developed a local job-listing service for full- and part-time work, and developed emergency folders for community members to indicate if members need help.

Another community organized an afterschool program with adult supervision and games where children can find a safe place to play or study.

Enthusiasm reflects participants' hopes for their towns, Petty said.

## UI helps expand one farm's product lines

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IN SHOSHONE, Laura Sluder of Blue Sage Farm will soon begin milking her grass-fed sheep in a sparkling new milking parlor. With the assistance of University of Idaho Extension faculty, Sluder was able to provide her bank with documentation it needed to support her 8-year-old business expansion from strictly meat sales to sheep's milk cheese.

UI Extension economist C. Wilson Gray and educator Christi Falen helped Sluder prepare the financial statements for her business plan, and UI Extension food processing specialist Jeff Kronenberg lent a hand with the

feasibility review. The outcome: a \$40,000 loan to build a barn in which to milk her sheep from late February to July and to refrigerate her meats and her aged, nutty-flavored Petit Basque cheese. The documentation also helped Sluder secure an \$83,000 USDA Value-Added Working Capital Grant for market assessment and promotion.

A graduate of the college's Lost Rivers Grazing Academy, Sluder calls UI's Extension faculty "the major component in getting everything together to make this business expansion succeed."

## UI helps NW artists market goods via Web & Moscow shop

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2 DEGREES NORTHWEST, UI Extension's initiative to help nurture economic vitality through the talents of Inland Northwest artists and artisans, will become a visible presence in Moscow in a few weeks.

The non-profit organization developed plans to open a storefront incubator in Moscow in March. Find details at <http://2dnw.org>.

About \$2,500 in UI Extension funding for paint and initial rental and utility fees will allow the organization to open a display space for regionally-made artwork and products plus a location for public workshops and a training ground for university students, said Lorie Higgins, UI Extension sociologist and project coordinator.

"Our primary goal is to be an incubator, to launch new businesses in the region—artisanal products from specialty foods to furniture—and then to draw tourists to the communities that produce them to boost their economies," Higgins said.

Conceived at the 2005 Idaho Governor's Conference on Recreation and Tourism, focus is on cultural tourism for communities with artisans living between 47 and 49 degrees latitude in Idaho and Washington.

### DID YOU KNOW?

**14.2%**

RURAL IDAHO POVERTY RATE IN 2007, COMPARED TO AN 11.1% POVERTY RATE IN URBAN IDAHO.

Source: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/StateFacts/ID.htm>