

## NUTRITION—UI nutrition experts help childcare operators face child obesity

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UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO child nutrition experts hope to build a bridge between parents and childcare operators who tend their children around issues of childhood obesity.

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences researchers Laurel Branen in Coeur d'Alene and Janice Fletcher in Moscow are studying the perceptions of parents and providers.

Part of a national project that includes University of Colorado researchers and colleagues at Washington State University, they hope to find effective ways for parents and childcare providers to cooperate.

The need is clear for childcare staff to communicate with parents about sensitive issues such as children's weight and need for physical activity, say the two professors of family and consumer sciences.

Communicating about how to help young children toward healthy weight is important. Fletcher quotes data that shows children who were overweight at 3 years old were overweight at 12; children who weren't overweight at 3 weren't at 12.

**Their study**, which includes development and dissemination of materials as well as learning about needs of parents and childcare staff, received \$1.1 million through the United States Department of Agriculture's National Research Initiative. Branen and Fletcher have interviewed childcare providers and parents to better understand issues they face.

The cultural aspects of the family guide eating habits, and those habits, along with children's physical activity, determine the risk of obesity. But weight and eating issues are difficult for childcare providers to address, Branen said.

**"Weight issues are always sensitive** and feeding issues are sensitive," said Branen. "It is much easier for childcare providers to talk with parents about a child development issue than feeding or nutrition or that a child seems to be developing a weight issue."

Obesity is a health problem among young children, Fletcher said. "We may not see it in 2- and 3-year-olds, but we're definitely seeing it in 4- and 5-year-olds."

Information collected from parents and childcare providers will guide the next phase of the project. The end goal is to provide information and training modules to deliver through a Web site with the help of their colleague Erik Anderson, director of the college's educational communications.

## Idaho teachers applaud UI Extension's calcium training; could reach 5,310 youth

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WHEN AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM held its 2007 teacher workshops, University of Idaho Extension faculty stepped up to the plate. Extension nutrition specialist Martha Raidl and Extension educator Rhea Lanting delivered their *Got Calcium?* curriculum to 177 teachers convening in five locations.

The pre-kindergarten to 12th grade teachers gave the curriculum top grades for cover-

ing calcium concepts and developing effective hands-on activities. If each teacher subsequently uses just one *Got Calcium?* lesson in a single class, Lanting estimates that 5,310 Idaho students will learn the importance of calcium.

"You only have until you're 30 to develop really strong, dense bones—and that's what you want," says Raidl. "After 30, bones start to break down faster than new bone can form."

## Dinner can be quick and healthy, with impressive results

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WHEN FOUR University of Idaho Extension educators developed and delivered a three-part curriculum on *Meal Time in Less Time* during the first half of 2007, it didn't take them much time at all to make a healthy difference in their clients' nutritional practices.

Focused squarely on planning, shopping for, and preparing meals that are both quick and nutritious, the curriculum produced significant behavioral changes within a few months.

It boosted the number of participants who:

- Add whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products to their meals (from 50% to 100%)
- Use healthy food preparation methods (from 37% to 98%)
- Evaluate their meals for nutrition (from 29% to 73%)
- Practice time-saving meal-preparation strategies (from 18% to 91%)
- Plan ahead for meals (from 23% to 84%)
- Use healthy food preparation methods (from 38% to 97%)

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### 30.1 MILLION

NUMBER OF AMERICAN CHILDREN EACH SCHOOL DAY WHO GOT THEIR LUNCHES THROUGH THE FEDERALLY SUBSIDIZED NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM IN FY2006. PROGRAM COST: \$8.2 BILLION IN FY06.

Source: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/>