

2010 FAMILY LIVING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

METHODS USED TO DETERMINE PROGRAM DIRECTION

- Strategic Planning Process, Advisory group
- Demographics (population, child abuse statistics)
- Input from selected groups (survey of clergy, financial people)
- Family Preservation and Support needs assessment process
- Community Health Needs Assessment

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Aging in Our Communities - The population in Taylor County is getting older with 16% of the population age 65 and over in 2007 and growing. The **Taylor County Aging Council** has begun to look at aging issues in Taylor County under the leadership of Diane Niggemann, director of Commission on Aging and Peggy Nordgren as co-chairs. Council members have been teaching older adults throughout the county how to prevent falls in their home. This year Nordgren taught 34 people about the importance of **Advance Directives** and the difference between living wills and power of attorney for health care while other council members provided programs on final affairs to over 300 people throughout the county.

Nordgren worked on a statewide committee writing instructional materials to go with the **employee caregiving survey** (piloted with county employees in 2008) so others could duplicate the research in their counties. As a result, Nordgren has been asked to provide leadership (co-chair) to a UWEX Family Living statewide team **Aging in Our Communities** which works with other Extension Agents on research, materials and curriculum to help their communities with aging issues.

Nordgren is currently working with Memorial Health Center (MHC) to distribute the same **employed caregiver survey** to their employees to find out if there are any caregiving issues which are affecting them on the job. This new research will help MHC understand employee needs in this area and help UW-Extension provide appropriate education in 2011 and beyond to help employees in their role as caregivers outside of the work place.

Strengthening Families and the Communities Where They Live and Work – Newsletters are the fastest and easiest way to reach many parents with support and information on child development to ease parents' anxiety about raising their children and ultimately to prevent **child abuse and neglect**. New parents and families' under financial stress especially need parenting support. Nordgren provides child development and parenting information to parents through these newsletters:

- Preparing to Parent Newsletter (50 through public health and at Baby Fair)
- Parenting the First Year Newsletter (78 parents)
- Parenting the Second and Third Year Newsletter (68 parents)
- Leaps and Bounds, bi-monthly newsletter for parents of 3-5 year olds (average distribution is 545 parents each newsletter)

Another area of **stress** for families is during **divorce**. Taylor County has provided the S.M.I.L.E. program through circuit court for twelve years to help divorcing families focus on their children's needs and less on conflict so parents can be successful co-parents. Five mental health providers and educators in the county take turns teaching this program every year. Since 1998, 103 classes have been held and 815 parents have learned how to successfully co-parent their children. Nordgren has co-taught 34 of those classes and reached 254 parents. Although parents are not happy about having to take the class (only 70% think the class should be mandatory), they feel they benefitted from it. On the evaluation, parents say the class helped them understand:

- what their children are going through (95%)
- why it is important for parents to cooperate after the divorce (92%)
- the importance of having a time sharing plan, which allows both parents to have a meaningful relationship with the children (90%)

Most parents felt the class would have an influence on the decisions they make regarding their children (89%) and would make a stronger effort to work with the other parent for the children's sake (88%).

Community Coalitions - Supporting families on a community level requires professionals and citizens to meet to explore what education and/or services families need and to know what services are already being provided by agencies and organizations in the county. Nordgren participates in several coalitions which support families and at the same time, reduces duplication so resources can be used efficiently.

Nordgren is chair of the **Taylor County Prevention Council** which developed and periodically revises the Directory of Services for Residents of Taylor County funded by circuit court. This year, she organized a panel of community people to discuss **mental health issues** in the county: what services are available to families, barriers to services and what services are still needed. A small group is being formed to find ways to help people become aware of mental health issues such as depression, stress, anxiety and others and how to get help.

Nordgren is also chair of the **Safe and Stable Families Steering Committee** which is in the twelfth year overseeing a state grant which provides funds to **prevent child abuse and neglect** in three areas:

- through a home visiting program for families of newborns,
- through parent education to support families with children at home and
- through an intensive in-home program where the goal is to reunite parents with their children.

State and national funds have been decreasing the last few years, so the committee is now responsible for overseeing only \$41,000 in programs for families from Safe and Stable Families grants. Nordgren has assisted the committee with preparations for loss of funds as well as prioritizing existing funds for better services. Preventing child abuse and neglect was the first family issue that Prevention Council worked on when it began in November 1992.

Managing Family Finances – In the past years, Taylor County families have experienced reduced employment or high unemployment. Family money problems increase because there are more bills each month than money to pay them. The need to reduce expenses, extra debt, home foreclosures and bankruptcy has been increasing among families.

Since 2003, the **Managing Your Money** program has been available to people who have been referred by the court, probation and parole, clerk of courts, Human Services and for bankruptcy (151). In the last two years, the three-part program has been advertised to the public. Fifty-four people have begun tracking their spending and have developed a family spending plan. Everyone who returned evaluations (53 of 54 people) thought the class was well done, materials were helpful, the teacher was helpful and well prepared and most important - they felt they learned something new. All but one person said they would continue to use a budget.

As a result of the class, the participants said they were more likely to:

- Pay bills on time (100%)
- Develop a bill paying system (95%)
- Save some money out of each paycheck (95%)
- Regularly review their spending (94%)
- Develop a recordkeeping process for finances (94%)
- Establish an emergency fund (91%)

This year Nordgren taught **Rent Smart** classes for eight people receiving help with their rent from Indianhead Community Action Agency. The Rent Smart program provides information on topics of greatest concern to tenants—leases, rights and responsibilities of renters, communicating with the landlord, home care and managing family finances to make sure the rent is paid on time. After the program, the participants stated:

- they were better prepared to ask questions of landlords before renting an apartment,
- they better understood security deposits,
- they felt more confident that they would be able to communicate with their landlord if problems occur and
- they felt confident that they could identify costs involved in renting an apartment.

Nordgren is currently conducting a **research project** with Head Start parents to find out what is the best way to **teach financial education**.

