

## 2011 FAMILY LIVING PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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### 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

**Wellness in Taylor County** - Heart disease is the number one cause of death in Taylor County and obesity rates are increasing. The Taylor County Wellness Committee received a grant to work with local businesses on wellness issues. The committee was able to provide cholesterol and blood pressure testing and some coaching for interested employees in six local businesses. As a follow-up to the testing, Nordgren was asked to provide a **healthy meal planning program** to the employees of several businesses; two newspaper and printing businesses, a hospital and a school district. If families can provide healthier meals within their busy schedules, family members will be able to improve their health.

In late 2010 and early 2011, Nordgren taught one or three-part seminars during a lunch break or afternoon break, depending on what was convenient for the employer. The goal of the seminar(s) was for participants to learn how to plan healthy meals that cost less and prepare them in less time.

Forty-two people have participated in at least one lesson in the three-part program Meal Planning in Less Time. Their understanding, attitudes and behaviors about meal planning were evaluated after each lesson. A pre-, post- evaluation showed the following improvement in participants' understanding and attitudes:

- Understanding what to consider in planning meals (47%-100%, before and after)
- Understanding how to read a nutrition label (48%-91%, before and after)
- Knowing time saving strategies for meals (26%-84%, before and after)
- Understanding how to make healthier recipes (63%-84%, before and after)

After the program, they were also more likely to say they plan to always:

- Practice thrifty shopping (74%)
- Add more whole grains, fruits and vegetables to their meals (70%)
- Evaluate their menus for ease of preparation (61%)
- Use healthier food preparation methods (58%)
- Use nutrition facts for evaluating meals (57%)

When families do some or all of these things, they will be planning healthier meals for their families and improve their health.

**Preserving Food Safely in the Home** - UW-Extension in Taylor County has always provided up-to-date, research-based information for families who preserve food at home, mainly through the media and one-on-one phone consultation. Due to the economy, many of Wisconsin residents are turning back to home food preservation as a way to save money and ensure healthy, wholesome food for their families. Educational programs offered by University of Wisconsin-Extension are critical to helping Taylor County families have home preserved food that is not only wholesome, but safe to eat.

**Educational programs** have been held during each summer since 2005. In addition, news releases for the local paper, newsletter articles, canner lid testing, web articles and one-on-one assistance have brought up-to-date, research-based information to more county residents. In 2011, 24 people attended one or more food preservation programs on jams and jellies, canning and freezing fruits and vegetables, making pickles and preserving tomatoes.

In the last two summers, 35 people have attended one or more food preservation programs. On pre-, post-evaluations, participants stated they learned why they need to use tested recipes for preserving (49% before – 93% after). After the program, they were more confident they could preserve safely in their home (56% before – 91% after). A follow-up evaluation was sent to participants' weeks after the program. 100 percent of those returning evaluations felt the instructor (Nordgren) was knowledgeable, gave clear instructions for preserving food, encouraged questions/answer participation and gave a good presentation. **They all said they had more confidence in their food preservation abilities.**

Participants stated that they did some things differently after the program, including not tightening rings too tight, used a pressure canner for the first time and tried freezing more produce. Two participants stated the most important thing they learned was not to deviate from the recipe and use the new guidelines for safely canning tomatoes.

**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. Many are staying in their homes longer and require care from family members who may still be in the workforce.

Nordgren worked with one employer in Medford to distribute the **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 this employer understand employee needs in this area and help employees be more productive. UW-Extension may help provide appropriate education in 2011 and beyond to help employees in their role as caregivers outside of the work place.

In 2010-11, Nordgren worked with the local hospital to conduct the survey with hospital and clinic employees in Medford and satellite offices. An executive summary was developed for the employer with the survey results and distributed during a presentation to the Human Resources department and the employer's wellness committee.

Survey results indicated 72 percent of employees who completed the survey are caregivers. Most are providing care for a parent or in-law (63 percent). The majority of the employed caregivers provides help driving people to appointments (81 percent); provide home maintenance (77 percent); help with completing forms or documents (62 percent); or grocery shopping or preparing meals (60 percent). Eighty-one percent of the employed caregivers spend up to seven hours per week completing caregiving duties.

Only 15 percent said caregiving has made their employment more difficult, however 19 percent have had to miss work due to caregiving responsibilities. When these employees miss work due to caregiving, they use vacation (25 percent) and personal time (14 percent) more often.

Over half of the employees returning the survey said they were most interested in learning more information about legal-financial-health care planning (39 percent), caregiving benefits offered through their employer (35 percent), community resources for caregivers (33 percent), coping with caregiving and making difficult decisions (26 percent). Employees said they would like to receive this information by an employee newsletter or fact sheets, lunch time seminars or by email.

In a follow-up interview six months after survey was conducted, the HR director was somewhat surprised that employees did not seem to know about their benefits. The company planned on using their newsletter to provide more information on this to their employees. A directory of services was given to the HR department for their employees from Commission on Aging and the employer was developing in-services for employees on caregiving topics.