



# “Healthy Habits” expands Extension’s outreach to new audiences

## AT A GLANCE

**Expanding Extension’s outreach to new audiences through technology. Virtual program delivery method used to reach non-traditional audiences.**

### The Situation

The current county-based face-to-face delivery of Extension education is failing to serve a progressive and growing constituency that not only desires, but also expects to find all forms of education and information available virtually (Diem, Journal of Extension, 2011). These online audiences will not participate in more traditional Extension educational offering, and ignoring their needs threatens the future viability of the Extension system.

### Our Response

To meet the needs of this virtual audience, Marsha Lockard and Barbara Abo, Ada County Extension Educators, piloted an 8 lesson class entitled “Healthy Habits” in the fall of 2012. In 2013 and 2014, the class was adopted statewide with enrollees from 28 counties in Idaho, as well as in Oregon and Washington. A total of 585 individuals have enrolled in the electronic class to date.

“Healthy Habits” eight lessons consist of the following topics: Lesson One – The Truth About Diets, Lesson Two – Learning to Accept Yourself, Lesson Three – Making Peace with Food, Lesson Four – Healthy Weight, Lesson Five – Choose My Plate, Lesson Six – News on Nutrients, Lesson Seven – A Healthy Approach to Fitness, and Lesson Eight – Maintaining Lifelong Habits.

Each lesson included a weekly challenge, that encouraged feedback from the participants. To assist with tracking food intake and exercise participants were encouraged to use the phone app **Lose It**. A pre-survey was sent to participants when they enrolled in the class and a post survey was done at the conclusion of the eight weeks of the class.

### Program Outcome

The pre and post surveys asked participants to report their daily consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grain, dairy and low fat dairy, as well as amount of physical activity. Increases were shown in all groups with significant increase in fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

Daily Servings	Pre – Mean	Post – Mean
Fruit	1.75	2.29
Whole Grain	1.98	2.35
Dairy	1.67	1.78
Low-Fat Dairy	1.40	1.47
Vegetables	2.15	2.46

Table 1 shows the 8 week change in consumption.

Physical activity increased from 73 minutes to 89 minutes per day.

Demographics of the audiences included 91% female, and 5% Hispanic. The age range of participants is shown in Table 2.

Age	Responses
18-24	1.13%
25-34	11.05%
35-44	17.56%
45-54	25.21%
55-64	33.99%
65 or older	11.05%

Methods by which individuals learned about the class varied between: email announcements, Facebook, flier or newsletter, website, and work-site.

Participant comments included:

- “The simple format made it convenient to read and ponder every week.”
- “I learned a lot about my eating habits using the Lose It app.”
- “I am a young stay at home mom so this was the perfect option for me to receive class instruction.”
- “The web sites were excellent, when ever I had a question I was referred to a website for more in-depth information. I appreciated the personal interest and quick response from the instructors.”

### The Future

Due to the success of the “Healthy Habits” virtual class, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators from across Idaho are writing additional classes to be offered statewide. An eight week virtual class in financial management entitled “Healthy Money Habits” is currently being completed to be offered in the fall of 2014. Additional classes entitled “Healthy Habits—Superfoods” and “Healthy Habits—Balanced Living” are currently being produced.

Other contributing faculty:

- Rhea Lanting, Twin Falls County
- Donna Gillespie, Minidoka County
- Laura Sant, Franklin County
- Kirstin Jensen, Idaho County
- Marnie Spencer, Bingham County
- Grace Wittman, Cassia County
- Joey Peutz, Payette County
- Lyle Hansen, Jerome County
- Luke Erickson, Madison County
- Sharlene Woffinden, Bear Lake County
- Sarah Hulse, Bonneville County

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Marsha Lockard**, Extension Professor  
 University of Idaho Extension, Ada County  
 5880 Glenwood  
 Boise, ID 83714  
 Phone: 208.287.5900  
 Fax: 208.287.5909  
 E-mail: mlockard@uidaho.edu

**Barbara Abo**, Extension Professor  
 University of Idaho Extension, Ada County  
 5880 Glenwood  
 Boise, ID 83714  
 Phone: 208.287.5900  
 Fax: 208.287.5909  
 E-mail: babo@uidaho.edu

11-14mlockard-healthyhabits.pub  
 7/14