

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Partnership develops community leaders who share safe food preservation practices

AT A GLANCE

For over seven years a partnership between UI Extension and a faith-based organization has increased access to fresh and home-preserved produce among low-income clientele.

The Situation

In 2011, community hunger and limited healthy food access were growing issues in Nampa, Idaho. Fifty-seven percent of students in the Nampa School District qualified for free and reduced lunch. The unemployment rate overall in Canyon County was 8.7%, with a poverty rate of 20%, and the Idaho Food Bank served 206,433 families statewide, many in this community.

These issues had been the driving force several years earlier for an initial successful partnership between University of Idaho Extension in Canyon County, Master Gardeners and Trinity Lutheran Church. Master Gardeners had established an extremely productive community garden on the church grounds, creating opportunities to educate and meet community needs. Trinity's emphasis on community outreach, engagement and service beyond their membership led to the church becoming a location for Extension's popular Idaho Victory Garden program. One week of this multi-week family gardening program featured Extension family and consumer sciences educators leading hands-on cooking and food preservation activities. The popularity of these activities, continued food insecurity issues and the increasing productivity of the Trinity Community Garden led partners to ask, "What can be



Trained master food safety advisor teaching participants how to properly fill jar with garden-fresh product, prior to processing.

done next?" Food preparation and food preservation education was identified as the next step to expand the usefulness of produce for year-round storage and consumption.

Our Response

Following positive experiences with the University of Idaho Extension's victory garden and master gardener programs, Trinity Lutheran Church leadership and volunteers reached out to University of Idaho Extension and the Idaho Food Safety Advisory Program. The intent was to help structure an impactful community education series on safely preserving food. A Domestic Hunger Grant from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America helped fund this program partnership.

This partnership with shared leadership initially focused on training volunteers in food safety and food preservation and creating a cookbook that would contain recipes made from six ingredients or less, that included produce commonly grown in southwest Idaho gardens. These trained volunteers provided a three-part hands-on food preservation series offered at the church and open to all in the surrounding community. Since the inception of the partnership, 13 community members have been trained as volunteers, seven hands-on workshops have been delivered (2013-2019) and more than 100 plus community members have participated in the series.

As a result, this partnership with Idaho Victory Gardens and the follow-up food preservation efforts have created significant clientele skill development and behavior changes. In addition, “Garden Produce Recipes” cookbooks were developed and over 750 were distributed in the community.

Of the 100 plus participants, over a five-year period, 72 respondents provided anonymous voluntary responses to questions that addressed knowledge gained, food safety and/or food preservation behavior change and increase in confidence.

Participants gained knowledge and/or awareness surrounding food safety and food preservation. As a result of this program:

- 92% of participants indicated an increase in awareness and/or knowledge on how to adjust for altitude when processing food in a boiling water canner
- 91.6% of participants indicated an increased knowledge/awareness in foodborne illness
- 91.4% of participants indicated knowing the difference between the food you can safely process in a pressure canner or boiling water canner

Participants had changes in ideas or behavior due to their attendance in this program.

- Prior to taking the series, 84% of participants reported that they did not or did not regularly use up-to-date tested, research-based recipes and recommendations when canning foods. After taking the series, 100% of respondents reported that they planned to use up-to-date tested, research-based recommendations.
- Before taking this program, 62% did not add or did not regularly add acid (lemon juice, citric acid, vinegar) when canning tomatoes and tomato products. Following their participation in this program, 100% of individuals answered that they would add acid according to recommendations when canning tomatoes and tomato products.

Participants also indicated confidence in their own skills after the program. They were asked if there were any other things you plan to do differently after this class.

- I was afraid to use a pressure canner before... now I will use one!
- I plan on actually canning for the first time.
- Yes, I plan on practicing what I learned and keep learning more.
- Teach my parents and siblings proper hand hygiene and cooking techniques.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Trinity Lutheran Church of Nampa, Idaho

Trinity Community Gardens, Inc.

University of Idaho Extension’s Canyon County Master Gardeners

University of Idaho Extension’s Master Food Safety Advisors

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