

# HEADS UP

## UPDATES AND ISSUES

### DIVERSITY AND CIVIL RIGHTS



Dallas L. Holmes, EdD. , USU Cooperative Extension, Diversity and Civil Rights Specialist (435) 770-0744 Vol. 7 Issue 4 October 2012

## **It's All About People: Moving Beyond Civil Rights 101**

If you aspire to be an effective Extension leader in addition to life experiences you need to develop wisdom by moving beyond the basics in your profession.

Developing wisdom implies the accumulation of knowledge and experience. You might think that wisdom comes with age! Each of us are acquainted with younger people that we view as wise beyond their years, and some of us may also know old fools. The truth is that wisdom is achieved a little bit at a time over our life time, day by day and bit by bit. Our perspectives and perceptions are indelibly shaped by life experiences, and our life experiences are shaped by dimensions of diversity like, race, gender and ethnicity.

Moving beyond the basics of quantifying and recording civil rights activity demonstrates the application of wisdom potentially ensuring success with diverse audiences and internally with civil rights compliance reviews. Being an effective recorder and cataloger of diversity data provides indicators of the successes with Extension stakeholders. This approach although necessary, may not provide the proactive approach needed to incorporate diversity in Extension programs. Program planners, in addition to thinking about how civil rights activity is recorded, need to carefully consider:

1. What do the population demographics tell them about potential community audiences to be served?
2. What programmatic connections exist with trusted cultural/diversity advisors in the community? Are these connections utilized?
3. How do we know and assess the real needs of the community? What role does Extension play in meeting those needs?
4. When planning programs what programmatic consideration is made concerning meeting location and time to maximize participation? Do these decisions meet the needs of the target audience?
5. Are program instructional approaches congruent with culturally diverse participants?
6. Has more than just "lip service" been applied to the principle of "all reasonable effort" in reaching underserved audiences in the community?
7. Have assessments been made to determine why diverse audiences did or did not attend past Extension programs?

Getting beyond the basics of merely counting and reporting activity demonstrates our ability to apply diversity wisdom in Extension programs. As an Extension organization we have mastered the ability to organize and report activities. It is now incumbent upon us that we reach for the next rung on the ladder of success by recognizing our role in consistently delivering culturally sensitive Extension programs to all Utahans. In so doing Extension positions itself to meet the needs of an ever growing diverse Utah population.

**"Utah State University is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution."**