

# RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION

20/0



StrongerMarriage.org™



Utah State University  
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

# INTRODUCTION TO PROGRAM

## RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION IN UTAH

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction to Program .....	1
<b>County Extensions:</b>	
Beaver County .....	2
Cache County .....	4
Carbon County .....	6
Emery County .....	8
Juab County .....	10
Salt Lake County .....	12
San Juan County .....	14
Tooele County .....	16
Utah County .....	18
Wasatch and Summit Counties .....	20
Washington County .....	22
Wayne County .....	24
Weber County .....	26

## PUBLICATION TEAM

### Senior Editors

Mitch Vaterlaus, Graduate Student

Linda Skogrand, Family Life Extension Specialist  
and Associate Professor

Brian Higginbotham, Family Life Extension Specialist  
and Associate Professor

Kay Bradford, Associate Professor in Family, Consumer,  
and Human Development

### Editors

County Extension Faculty

### Graphic Design & Layout

Ashlee Karren, Graphic Designer

Relationship education (RE) is an important part of Family Consumer Science (FCS) faculties' programming in Utah. Recognizing the expertise and state-wide reach of Utah State University (USU) Extension, the Utah Commission on Marriage, a component of the Utah Department of Workforce Services (DWS), financially supports Extension's RE programs. In the first programmatic year, with DWS support, FCS faculty in 14 of Utah's 28 counties that have Extension offices participated in offering RE programs.

The three USU faculty members who provided oversight for this program, with equal responsibility, are Dr. Kay Bradford, Dr. Brian Higginbotham, and Dr. Linda Skogrand. They participated in awarding funds to county faculty, oversaw the fiscal management of the funds, provided technical support to the county faculty, and evaluated the RE activities.

The county faculty provided a wide range of RE opportunities with varying degrees of funding. Some were awarded funds for multiple activities in their counties, while others requested funds for only one activity. Some faculty offered multiple classes as part of a series, and others offered one-time events. Some activities were for high school age youth, others were for single adults, and still others were for married couples. County faculty members proposed activities that they anticipated would work in their respective counties and would be doable considering their existing workload.

The 14 county faculty members should be commended for their hard work and success of the activities they implemented. Over 8,000 residents of Utah were provided some type of RE. Approximately 1,000 of these residents were low-income or members of diverse populations.

This booklet highlights the work of the FCS faculty who participated in this program in 2009-2010. We learned about their successes through regular reports, observations, and face-to-face interviews. We congratulate each of them and affirm the RE they provided is enhancing the lives of couples and families throughout Utah.



Left to Right:  
Brian Higginbotham, Linda Skogrand, & Kay Bradford



# BEAVER COUNTY

CLINT ALBRECHT, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for 10 different relationship education (RE) activities in our county. Our major goal was to provide divorce prevention activities in fun and interactive ways. We partnered with local churches, head start programs, and established youth programs. Our programs ranged from one-night events, newspaper articles, face-to-face education, and the utilization of marriage activity cards.

## MARRIAGE ACTIVITY CARDS

We developed the activity cards (with 15 suggested activities) to encourage couples to spend quality time together. When 10 of the activities were completed they could be redeemed for a small cash award. The activity cards had three “must dos” which were: set or revisit your financial goals, attend the marriage event during National Marriage Week, and write a letter to your spouse. The cards also included “on your honor” events that were to be completed without children such as go on a hike together or read a book together. 400 cards were distributed throughout the county. Several people came into the Extension office

requesting multiple cards including hospital and church representatives. Twenty couples redeemed their cards. Some confusion about the “redeem by” date led fewer couples to submit their cards. Although difficult to identify, many couples partially completed the activity cards. Several mentioned through conversation that they enjoyed completing the activities and it did benefit their marriage. These activity cards were a helpful tool in encouraging husbands’ participation in marital enrichment activities.

## MARRIAGE EVENTS

We did several one-night events. Our most successful event was held during National Marriage Week. We had a speaker, dinner, and a DJ as part of this event. We played *Couples Feud* patterned after the game show *Family Feud* and included interactive games at each table (e.g. tell your engagement story). A diverse group of 125 people representing each major community and bridging religious, racial and social groups enjoyed this event. There were a number of requests that this event be offered annually.

## YOUTH WORKSHOPS

During the course of three workshops, 135 youth were taught how to identify and cultivate a healthy relationship. We used a research-based curriculum called *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette)*. Youth were very engaged in the discussion and it was easy to tell how confused youth are when it comes to what a healthy relationship should look like. These workshops laid a foundation for them as they date and form relationships that is much different from what is portrayed in the media.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We have a relatively small county (around 6,000 residents) where class participants are friends and neighbors. This makes relationship education tricky because the residents do not want to attend for fear that sensitive issues will be discussed with people that they know personally. We have found that providing relationship education activities in fun and interactive ways (e.g. date nights) has provided a way of reaching a larger part of our county.

“Our major goal was to provide divorce prevention activities in fun and interactive ways.”





# CACHE COUNTY

ADRIE ROBERTS, FCS AGENT

This was our first experience offering relationship education (RE) in Cache County. We received funding for three programs. Our programs were designed to meet the needs of the community as a whole and additionally to meet the needs of the growing Latino population in our county.

## MARRIAGE AND RELATIONSHIP STRENGTHENING (MARS)

We offered a series of four workshops in two months' time for couples in Cache County. All workshop speakers were professors from Utah State University. At the completion of the four workshops a dinner and speaker were provided for couples at a local restaurant during marriage week. We advertised the program through flyers and radio. We found the majority that attended came through word-of-mouth referrals. We had 40 couples attend the workshops. We received very positive feedback and several people asked if the workshops would be available next year.

## LATINO MARS

We also offered the workshops specifically for Latino Couples. In Cache County we have a Latino Advisory Council that is made up of religious leaders and professionals that work with the Latino population. The council was helpful in making the workshops culturally sensitive (e.g. flyers, programming, food, location). We found our partnership with the local LDS churches was particularly helpful for recruiting Latino participants. The program was offered at a local elementary school and all four workshops were taught in Spanish. All of the workshops included a dinner (catered by a local Latino restaurant) and child care. Children's activities were sponsored by Food \$ense representatives and we averaged 20 children in attendance at each workshop. We advertised by distributing approximately 2,000 flyers to local Latino churches and businesses. We also had advertisements on a local Spanish radio station. We had 49 adults that attended at least one of the Latino MARS workshops.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We found that providing RE programs in English and Spanish were well received in our county. We discovered that providing education for the Latino population is very time consuming and rewarding. Serving dinner, finding a speaker, and providing childcare took a large amount of time but were essential in providing culturally sensitive RE. Many volunteers from Utah State University were required to provide child care at these meetings. Additionally, Latino participants were not likely to pre-register for the events, so it was necessary to plan on more people attending the workshops than registered.

“Our programs... meet the needs of the growing Latino population in our county.”





# CARBON COUNTY

ELLEN SERFUSTINI, FCS FACULTY

**W**e received funding for five different RE activities in our county. We provided courses and one-time events for adults and youth. We also developed and distributed a county newsletter that focused on healthy relationships.

## EAT AND EDUCATE

We partnered with the 4-H's Youth and Family with Promise (YFP) program in our community to provide RE. The YFP program is designed to be a prevention program for at-risk youth between the ages of 10-14 years of age. Participants are referred by teachers, counselors, administrators, and other organizations that provide services to youth. One of the regular components of the program is a "family night out." In two sites we provided an evening of eating and education for the participant's parents/guardians. Gas/grocery cards were used as programmatic supports and we served 37 county residents. The event was catered and we provided relationship education using the *Smarts PLUS* curriculum. We emphasized positive communication in romantic relationships and with children. Participants commented on how the

education provided helpful information that they were willing to try. Following the parent education portion of the program, the youth joined the parents and engaged in some fun, communication-based activities.

## LIFE SKILLS CLASS

To provide RE to younger people in the community we partnered with the Utah Department of Workforce Services to teach communication and relationship skills to children in the foster care program. We provided relationship education in a two-and-a-half hour class utilizing the *Smart PLUS* curriculum. Two separate classes were held which served a total of 18 children. We found that the youth in our classes had unrealistic expectations concerning dating and sexual relationships and this program helped them be more realistic.

## LESSONS LEARNED

There is a high population of low-income residents in our county. Approximately 80% of the Extension programs that we offer are provided for low-

income residents. We have found that relationship education may not be a priority for people with the stresses of living in lower-resource families. Instead of developing new programs to provide RE we have found success through incorporating components of RE into our existing programs. This has also allowed us to support prevention services to a potentially high-risk population. Our participants have been receptive and appreciative of the RE that they have received.

"We emphasized positive communication in romantic relationships and with children."





# EMERY COUNTY

CHRISTINE JENSEN, FCS FACULTY

**W**e planned and organized a one-time relationship education (RE) event for couples and individuals in our community during Marriage Week.

## MARRIAGE WEEK SPEAKER

Marriage Week is a very busy time in our county and many activities are traditionally held during this week. We worked closely with our inter-agency council to determine the best evening and type of activity that would attract residents in our county. We decided to have a speaker and to have him speak early in the evening on Saturday, February 13th. Holding the activity early allowed couples and individuals to participate in other Marriage Week activities later in the evening.

We got Matt Townsend, a well-known speaker on relationships and author of the book *Starved Stuff: Feeding the 7 Basic Needs of Healthy Relationships*, to be our speaker. We received great advertising support from the local LDS and Baptist churches. We started advertising the event in December and used many outlets including newsletters, newspapers, television, radio, schools and the internet.

We invited people married or single over the age of 16 to attend the event. Tickets were sold for attendance and ticket holders each received a copy of the speaker's book.

We had 23 couples and 5 individuals attend the event which was a surprisingly large turnout for our small county. Feedback from the participants was overwhelmingly positive and many have asked for more RE. Additionally, the local library requested some copies of Matt Townsend's book because several people had requested to check it out.

## LESSONS LEARNED

We have been hesitant to provide RE in our county because previous attempts have not been well attended. We found that doing a one-time relationship event that received a lot of attention has increased the county's interest in RE. We have planned additional RE activities for the next year because of the requests in our county. Our partnerships with the local churches and our inter-agency council were invaluable in planning and getting people to attend the event.



“We found that doing a one-time relationship event that received a lot of attention has increased the county's interest in relationship education.”



# JUAB COUNTY

MARGIE MEMMOTT, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for three different relationship education (RE) activities in our county. The funded activities varied from education in high-schools, a large community event and a regular column in the local newspaper.

## HEALTHY DATING AND RELATIONSHIP ESSAY CONTEST

We partnered with a local High School to provide education on relationships. While we were planning the format of the class we received feedback that a speaker might not be the best option. It was hypothesized that a one-day event that allowed students to miss class may not get the attention that was desired. A plan was made to partner with student body officers. For a month, they provided daily healthy relationship tips by way of the daily student body announcements. Students were also invited to participate in a special writing essay contest, which required the submission of a 200 word essay about healthy relationships. The announcements reached over 600 students and 50 school staff members each day. We had 53 students submit essays and the top 20 essay winners received

a cash award, two movie tickets, and a concession voucher (donated by a local movie theatre). The Student Body Officers were invested and excited about their role in providing relationship education. The school administrators and teachers were happy with the results and indicated that they noticed an improvement in the students' interactions during the month.

## UTAH MARRIAGE HANDBOOK

We received support and assistance in planning and advertising our events from our Local Interagency Council which includes members of city and county departments, school districts, and religious organizations. We provided an opportunity for county residents to come to the Juab County Extension office at their convenience and receive a brief introduction to the *Utah Marriage Handbook*. Couples and individuals were invited to participate. A cash incentive was given to residents who completed one of the activities in the handbook and who submitted a 200 word essay about their experience. We had 122 people participate from the county. We were also excited about a local credit

union's willingness to publicize the opportunity on their electronic marquee, which stands next to the only stoplight in town.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of our goals was to increase attention about marriage and relationship topics in our county. We have made previous attempts to provide RE in a workshop format. The workshops have been excellent for those in attendance but do not reach a large number of people. Our attempts to provide flexible and short-term RE have been well received by the community. They are beginning to see the importance and value of RE topics and this may open the door to offering more intensive programming.

“The student body officers were invested and excited about their role in providing relationship education.”





Marilyn Albertson



Melanie Jewkes

# SALT LAKE COUNTY

MARILYN ALBERTSON AND MELANIE JEWKES, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for five different RE activities in our county. Our activities were designed for diverse and low-income populations and included one-time classes on varying topics. In collaboration with partnering community organizations and businesses, classes were held as lunch-time meetings as well as in the evening.

## DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS WHILE STRENGTHENING RELATIONSHIPS

We partnered with a local elementary school parent group to provide a course. The principal of the school provided the location, technical support, and refreshments for the class. The parent group advertised with flyers throughout the area. We sent flyers to those who had previously attended Extension events. We also used radio, library flyers and the internet to advertise. A childcare voucher was provided for couples and individuals who attended and had children under the age of 12. We used the *Utah Marriage Handbook* as the foundation for the class. We had 30 people attend the course and we received very positive feedback from our partners at the school and were invited

to present another workshop on communication about money in marriage later in the spring.

We also partnered with the Salt Lake County Housing Authority Self Sufficiency Program. The program coordinator was excited about our partnership and distributed approximately 300 flyers. The Housing Authority provided a location for participation and childcare. Childcare was provided for children of the participants on site. We did have some refugees attend the sessions, which we considered a success.

Both of our partnerships with the elementary school parent group and the Salt Lake County Housing Authority Self Sufficiency Program allowed us to present additional RE classes. We offered our *What Do We Do about the Money—Money Matters in Marriage* class in both locations.

We adapted the class titles for people not specifically married and used, *You've Got a Friend in We—Building Better Relationships*. This was taught for 37 singles at a local congregation and 94 employees at a business to help them develop better relationships with spouses, family

members, significant others, co-workers and friends. Due to the success and interest by employees at the business, classes were requested for 2011. Additional communication about money classes have been requested at various locations as well. A total of 295 participants attended the various RE classes offered during the grant.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One of the challenges we found in providing RE in our urban county was that residents have many options of programming to attend. We have also found difficulty in finding a location to hold our events. Our success in overcoming these challenges was accomplished through building partnerships with different organizations. In addition to the partnerships mentioned above, we found success in partnering with the local LDS church congregations, local businesses and agencies that are already providing services for county residents. These partnerships have been invaluable in advertising and providing facilities for the classes to be held.

“...our partnerships with the elementary school parent group and the Salt Lake County Housing Authority Self Sufficiency Program allowed us to present additional relationship education classes.”





# SAN JUAN COUNTY

LOU MUELLER, FCS FACULTY

The Relationship Education (RE) program was introduced in San Juan County in 2009-2010, thanks to funding from a Marriage and Relationship Strengthening grant. With a predominantly Navajo population, our first goal was to provide marriage education for Navajo couples. Working with diverse cultures can be challenging, and we recognized the critical need to build collaborative partnerships with Navajo organizations. After significant time and effort, exciting partners emerged in Utah Navajo Health System, Inc. and Blue Mountain Diné. Each organization offered exciting venues for reaching Navajo audiences both on and off the Navajo reservation.

## STRONG MARRIAGES FOR NAVAJO COUPLES

To set the scene, it is important to recognize that despite a rich cultural heritage, until recently, the Navajo people had no published literature on what makes Navajo marriages strong. In an earlier study, Dr. Linda Skogrand, Lou Mueller and others conducted interviews with 21 Navajo couples who felt they had strong marriages about

what made their marriages strong. Significant findings included: 1) maintain communication, 2) nurture your relationship, 3) learn about marriage, 4) be prepared for marriage, and 5) have a strong foundation. Teachings from the study were published in the *Strong Marriages for Navajo Couples: Activity Book for Couples*, which was used as curriculum for our Navajo Couple Relationship Education classes. Participants received copies of the workbook and culturally appropriate lessons to help them strengthen their relationships. Five classes were offered in three Navajo communities. Well-liked and respected Navajo teachers and leaders were given honorariums as co-presenters, participants received meals and programmatic supports, and children were welcomed to attend with their parents. These factors and our co-presenter's abilities to interject Navajo culture, tradition, and humor into each lesson, raised attendance at one site from 17 to 73 participants by the end of the series. Classes at all sites were well attended and nearly 400 participants came away with culturally appropriate tools to build stable, happy and safe couple and family relationships.

## LESSONS LEARNED

By recognizing and respecting cultural traditions of the people we served, our RE program for Navajo couples was a huge success. We found that forming collaborative partnerships with Navajo organizations providing services on and off the Navajo reservation was critical for success. These venues allowed us to reach Navajo audiences not otherwise available to us. We built further credibility by including community leaders and teachers to help co-present, and we used culturally appropriate curriculum—teachings by Navajo people for Navajo people. Responding to the needs of our audience was also important. When we found that evening classes were not well attended, we quickly switched to lunch hours and attendance increased significantly.

Meals were an essential key to recruiting and maintaining participants, but with no public food services on the reservation, a partnership with the Food \$ense program was essential. Food \$ense provides lessons about nutrition, food safety and food security for low-income households. Since the majority of our RE participants qualified as low-income, we utilized the Food \$ense Nutrition Education Assistant (NEA) to prepare nutritious menus. The NEA also taught a brief nutrition lesson tied to principles of strong relationships (e.g., eating balanced meals and finding balance in relationships). Our partnership with Food \$ense allowed the NEA to increase her outreach and provided her with new audiences to teach, so it was a win-win partnership.

“Working with diverse cultures can be challenging, and we recognized the critical need to build collaborative partnerships with Navajo organizations.”





# TOOELE COUNTY

DARLENE CHRISTENSEN, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for four relationship education (RE) activities in our county. We have had a strong history of providing RE in our county for the last three years. Our activities ranged from a social marketing campaign, Valentine’s Day celebration, marriage curricula, and education for single/engaged residents.

## MARRIED AND LOVING IT

We offered a program over a five-week time period for married couples in our community entitled *Married and Loving It*. The curriculum focuses on improving communication, establishing strong family finances, and conflict resolution. We have a marriage coalition in our county that is comprised of community members. The coalition has been a huge support in planning and implementing relationship activities in our county. One couple from this coalition was willing to teach the curriculum. We provided childcare as it was determined that couples may not have been able to attend without this service. We had 12 couples attend the session and seven who attended four or more. Feedback from the participants was positive. They indicated that they increased their knowledge of relationship skills.

## TOOELE COUNTY VALENTINE’S DAY CELEBRATION

We have had a Valentine’s Day Celebration for the last three years. This Valentine’s Day event had increased visibility this year with guest speaker John Bytheway. The focus of John Bytheway’s talk was about improving couple communication. We did have difficulty finding an affordable venue. The largest facility we could afford only seated 100. We were able to reach some new couples who had not been to a Valentine’s Day event in previous years. Over 50% of couples were new at the event this year. Many couples who attended the event in previous years waited three weeks before the event when it was already filled to capacity. Following the speaker we had a marriage award ceremony, DJ (not funded by DWS), and dancing. At the beginning of the evening, couples were given a small card that asked what “their song” was and why. The DJ called couples out to the dance floor and told the story of their song, then played the music. This was very popular and built a loving feeling with couples.

## LESSONS LEARNED

In the past we have found it difficult to reach the lower-income residents in our county. This year we offered discounts and fee waivers for low-income participants. With the assistance of the grant we also were able to offer different programmatic supports to encourage participation. This greatly increased the participation of low-income residents in RE. We also found that engaged and single county residents were receptive to preventative RE in our county with the use of the *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette)* curriculum. RE can be a beneficial for people from all walks of life.

“The [community] coalition has been a huge support in planning and implementing relationship activities in our county.”





# UTAH COUNTY

## JANA DARRINGTON, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for four different RE activities in our county. Two of our activities were for activities that were already in place. These included the City of Lehi Celebration of Marriage and teaching healthy relationship skills within the 4-H mentoring program. We also provided a variety of one-time RE events.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT CLASSES

We offered three different opportunities for couples to spend time making food together while learning about ways to strengthen their relationships. The first activity included the topics of kindness, good communication, coping with emotions and stress, breaking bad habits, friendship, sacrifice, and romance. These were taught in conjunction with the building of gingerbread houses. The construction and decorating process provided a helpful analogy for teaching these principles. A second event was provided where an adjunct Family Studies professor from Brigham Young University presented “the ingredients” for successful marriages (e.g. research from Dr. John Gottman). Couples were invited to discuss the topic and combine the ingredients to

make waffles. Our final Food for Thought class was used to teach couples how to make home-made pasta and sauce. The class focused primarily on communication and achieving a successful balance as a couple. We taught different methods for making successful pasta and related that to finding success in relationships—there isn’t a right or wrong way but with the right ingredients there can be successful outcomes. We served 100 adults in offering these one-time classes.

### DATE NIGHTS

We also offered a series of date nights for couples which included activities along with relationship education. We reached 62 adult participants with our date nights. One of our well received date nights was a massage date night. This class talked about relieving stress within a relationship, open communication, and how to help a partner relax in the face of stress. Couples were led by local and licensed massage therapists to practice specific techniques with their partner. Couples commented afterward how much they had enjoyed the class and learning the techniques.

### LESSONS LEARNED

We have received very positive feedback from our date nights and Food for Thought classes. Food and interactive activities have been good incentives in increasing participation. We have been impressed with the number of people who have been frequent participants at these events. When people are attending multiple one-time events they are accumulating a variety of relationship skills. We have found that our best advertising techniques are using email lists from people who have already attended a course in the past. Word of mouth has also increased the number of people on these email lists. We have found that there is a lot of interest in RE in our county.

“We taught different methods for making successful pasta and related that to finding success in relationships—there isn’t a right or wrong way but with the right ingredients there can be successful outcomes.”





Susan Haws



Debbie Proctor

# WASATCH & SUMMIT COUNTIES

SUSAN HAWS & DEBBIE PROCTOR, FCS FACULTY

**R**elationship education (RE) has not been offered in our counties for several years. We teamed up to provide RE for our first year of offering programs because we are geographically close together. We were funded for two programs. We provided workshops for English and Spanish speaking residents.

## HEALTH MARRIAGE WORKSHOPS

We offered two different workshops collaboratively in our counties. We found dates that were close to Valentine’s Day so relationships would be on peoples’ minds. The curriculum for the workshops was based on information from the *Utah Marriage Handbook*. In preparation for the workshops we partnered with the Utah Division of Workforce Services, local religious leaders, a community counseling clinic, and schools. We used a shotgun approach with advertising putting announcements in the newspaper, newsletters, and provided flyers. We attempted to get the majority of our workshop necessities from the community including the catered meals and the presenters. We provided every couple or participant with a copy of the *Utah Marriage Handbook* and *Family Treasures: Creating Strong Families*.

We had a good turnout for both workshops. The English workshop had 43 participants in attendance. We had some engaged couples and a single participant. Our Spanish workshop had five couples, two single women, and eight children. We were not expecting to have children in attendance at the event. The presenter, however, did a nice job including them in the activities. We received very positive feedback about the workshops. We have received letters thanking us for providing the programs and asking when future RE opportunities will be available. We have also received feedback from participants that from their participation they have become more aware of relationship resources in the community (e.g. books, classes offered through various religious groups, etc.).

## LESSONS LEARNED

Providing RE for the Latino population was more challenging than originally expected. We found that it was difficult to find people to translate the materials into Spanish and to find a Spanish-speaking presenter. It is apparent that there is a

lack of RE materials in Spanish. We also discovered that Latinos are not likely to pre-register and they will bring their children even when they originally committed to coming as a couple. We felt like that this first Spanish-speaking RE workshop was an important trust-building opportunity for our counties. We expect a larger turnout in future RE for Spanish speaking residents. Another important lesson learned concerned the catered meals. We had a quote for the meals eight months in advance. As the workshops approached the quotes increased because of economic changes. We recommend getting quotes in writing and having them signed in order to stay within budget constraints.

“...from their participation they have become more aware of relationship resources in the community.”





# WASHINGTON COUNTY

CAROLYN WASHBURN, FCS AGENT

We received funding for eight different relationship programs (RE) in our county. Our county has had one of the highest divorce rates in Utah and we have been emphasizing the importance of marriage education for the last six years. The grant money was used to continue providing and improving existing programs. Our programming has taken a variety of forms including marriage newsletters, community marriage celebrations, one-night events and multiple week classes.

## MARRIAGE SURVIVAL: IT'S A JUNGLE OUT THERE

One of our most successful programs is our Marriage Survival course. The name we used to market the course focused on the goal of strengthening marriage relationships rather than repairing marriages. The curriculum has evolved over the last six years. Subjects that are presented included: commitment, communication, financial harmony, healthy relationships (domestic violence prevention), blending families, divorce busters, pornography and addictions. The classes were taught over a seven-week period which required a 10-15 hour time commitment from couples. Light meals and childcare were provided at each class. Couples were

given relationship resources at the conclusion of each session (e.g. books, pamphlets, packets). Additionally, programmatic supports were given to those attending the classes.

The series of classes were held on Monday evenings. This did pose a challenge because the dominant religious group (LDS) adheres to a weekly family night on Monday evenings. It was essential to provide child-care to increase the likelihood of attendance. We partnered with the local interfaith council and their advertising allowed us to reach a religiously diverse audience. Other partnerships with school districts and Head Start programs also allowed us to reach a lower-income and ethnically diverse audience. In addition to the classes taught by our staff some were taught by relationship professionals in the community. Over the 2009-2010 year we served over 420 individuals. At least 75 couples attended more than one class and 25 couples completed the full series. A variety of participants have attended including unmarried couples and couples in their 80's. The couples reported that they enjoyed the course. Some participants have requested additional information specifically

about intimate sexual relationships. The program has resulted in increased interest from our county commissioners and led to an article in the local newspaper.

## WASHINGTON COUNTY ANNUAL MARRIAGE CELEBRATION

One of our annual events is the county marriage celebration. The event is designed to be an afternoon and evening full of education and enrichment. We have an established and ongoing marriage coalition in our county that is very helpful in putting this event together. The event is held in the Washington City Recreational Center. The theme this year was "Surviving the Jungle Out There" which was an extension of our ongoing curriculum theme.

The event served 130 individuals from the community. We hosted nine workshops with different topics of relationship enhancement for the attendees. We also had a keynote speaker that connected some magical entertainment with marital education. Dinner was provided which included a recognition ceremony that honored three couples who have strong relationships and one couple who was recognized for a creative date night they had planned.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Marketing has been a critical component to our successes in providing RE in our county. This has included developing inclusive and enticing program titles. We also have had appealing flyers and advertisements that emphasized the themes represented in our program titles. We placed some of these advertisements in a free section of the newspaper. The days the advertisements ran usually resulted in an average

of four couples inquiring about the program. We also used partnerships with restaurants, a marriage photography company, a reception center, a plant nursery, and the Chamber of Commerce as ways of recruiting more participants. Consistently we have found that people were more likely to attend our events when child care was provided.

"We partnered with the local interfaith council and their advertising allowed us to reach a religiously diverse audience."





# WAYNE COUNTY

LISA LEWIS, FCS FACULTY

**W**e received funding for one relationship education (RE) activity. We wanted to provide an activity for our county that would serve both adults and children.

## FAMILY NIGHT IN THE PARK

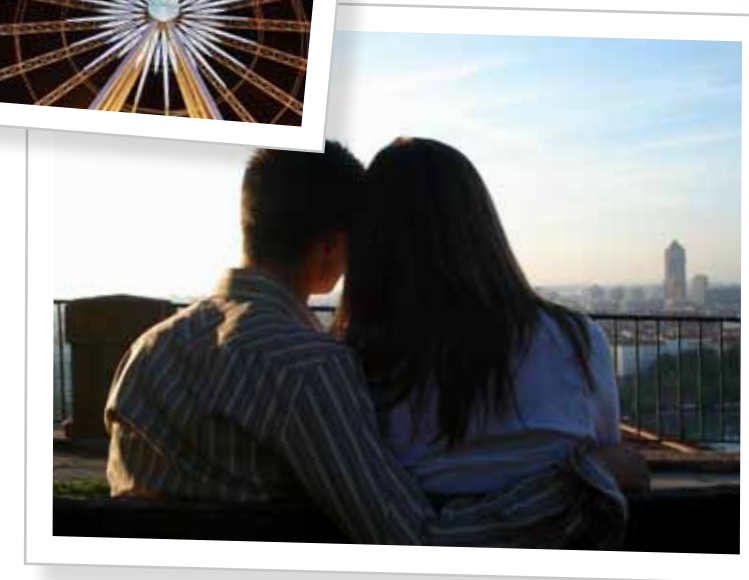
The Wayne County Extension office held our event for families at a local park. We called it “Celebrating Families” and included a dinner and activities on June 17th in the Loa Town Park. The activities were team-based and required positive communication and teamwork skills. Family members were encouraged to participate in the activities together. Materials such as the *Utah Marriage Handbook* and a list of support resources (websites and local/state domestic violence support hotlines) were provided to adults attending. The Wayne County Sheriff’s Office personnel provided resources and representatives from their department were in attendance to support the event.

Feedback and turnout at the event was great. Many parents said it was nice to have a family-

friendly event. The event encouraged interaction within the couple relationship, with family, and with friends. We received many positive comments about the food and overall relaxed atmosphere. The Celebrating Families event was held following a 4-H activity. Parents commented that it was nice holding this event following a 4-H event their children attended, and that the 4-H event helped them remember the event and helped them plan their day around it.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Our County has approximately 2,000 residents. With a small population there is little anonymity available with programming. No one wants to admit there are RE needs. By providing a low-intensity family activity which included information about couple relationships, we were able to reach a good number of county residents with RE.



“By providing a low-intensity family activity which included information about couple relationships, we were able to reach a good number of county residents.”



# WEBER COUNTY

NAOMI BROWER, FCS FACULTY

We received funding for five different relationship education programs (RE) in our county. Some of our activities were developed specifically for this grant and others were existing programs that were expanded. We provided programming that involved one-night events, curricula that involved meetings over several weeks, and relationship education for couples and single participants.

## HOW TO AVOID FALLING FOR A JERK(ETTE)

We wanted to do more divorce prevention for couples but found that pre-marital couples were difficult to reach because they were busy with marital preparations. We were particularly excited about providing a opportunity for single participants in the form of *How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk(ette)* course. This is a five-week course designed to educate single participants about how to prepare for healthy relationships. Course content includes the key areas that need to be considered when choosing a partner. Participants were each provided with a workbook in order to more fully utilize and retain the information.

We implemented these courses with adults and adolescents. To increase interest in the full course, we offered one-time overview sessions of the course in the community and in the schools. One of the particular strengths of our programming was our partnership with the Division of Workforce Services (DWS). Within the year we provided the course for 48 single adults at DWS. An additional 142 adults also attended this program in other settings in the community.

Implementing the program within junior high and high schools as supplemental education was an exciting endeavor. The course was offered to 547 adolescent participants throughout the year. This was an unexpected success and has led to strong relationships with school districts and individual teachers. One of the challenges of providing this particular program was getting permission to use the workbooks. Some content had to be removed from the workbooks in order to provide the course, and these restrictions varied by school district. We also found that implementing relationship skills in this format was more effective with high school students than with junior high students. There were some major successes in addition to the number of

students served. Community recognition increased through the publication of a local newspaper article about the program. The relationship with the school districts has also increased access to providing relationship education to high-risk youth.

We were also able to reach the Latino population by adapting some of the course content to be culturally sensitive and implementing the program in Spanish as an addendum to other established relationship curriculum. This was made possible through our partnership with the Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnership, Inc. (OWCAP).

## DATE NIGHTS

As part of the grant we offered a series of one-night date opportunities. Our purpose in implementing date nights was to provide short-term relationship education by providing fun and interactive activities rather than a sit down RE course. Each date night taught a principle of relationship education and was tied to the activity. Each couple was also given a book or pamphlet emphasizing a topic about relationship enhancement at the conclusion of the date night. Throughout the year, 55 couples attended date nights. Activities ranged from disc-golf, massage therapy instruction, hands on cooking classes, games, high adventure ropes course, and indoor skydiving. These interactive date nights were especially designed to appeal to men. We have found that people who attended one date night came to more date nights and varied depending on the activities being offered. Many couples attended three to four date nights in a row. We believe that our participants who are attending these one-time events are getting some of the same benefits of longer courses because of the frequency of their attendance. One programmatic support that increased attendance was providing food.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Part of our success in implementing RE programming has been offering a variety of events ranging from smaller to larger time commitments. Providing different types of education has allowed us to reach a variety of people in different ways. Our partnerships have been invaluable for recruitment and providing locations for instruction. We have also found developing an e-mail list has been a good way to advertise and recruit. We ask our participants if they would like to receive e-mails concerning upcoming events. We periodically send e-mails with upcoming activities and encourage the recipients to pass the e-mail on to others who might be interested. We usually get four or five couples signing up for events right after distributing the e-mail.

“Providing different types of education has allowed us to reach a variety of people in different ways.”




# UtahStateUniversity

## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

e x t e n s i o n . u s u . e d u

FR/Marriage/2011-02



Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions. Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities. This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.