



2025

USU EXTENSION HOME & COMMUNITY IMPACT REPORT

Programs Delivered by USU Extension County Faculty & Extension Specialists



Extension
UtahStateUniversity



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LETTER FROM

THE DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

Welcome to the 2025 Impact Report of the Utah State University (USU) Extension Home and Community Department. As life continues to grow more complex, our programs evolve to support individuals and families in meeting diverse needs. Through in-person and online courses, blogs, websites, and social media, Utah residents can access research-based information to support health and wellness, strengthen relationships, safely prepare food, manage finances, care for their homes, prepare for emergencies, and more.

The year 2025 brought notable adversity and change, creating challenges for communities and Extension professionals alike. Despite these obstacles, our faculty continued their work with passion and dedication—delivering programming in their counties and finding success in addressing local needs. Their resilience and commitment to service remain at the heart of our impact.

Faculty and staff responded to local and statewide needs identified through comprehensive assessments, designing evidence-based programs that provide practical solutions and meaningful support for the individuals and families we serve.

To better serve as a clearinghouse for our work, we strengthened the Home and Community department webpage. We encourage you to visit the [USU Extension Home and Community Department site](#) to explore the breadth of our educational offerings and community outreach efforts.

As we reflect on 2025, we commend our faculty for their continued dedication and perseverance. We are proud of the progress made and look forward to advancing the USU Extension mission—to provide evidence-based programs and services to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities throughout Utah—as we move into 2026. Thank you for your continued support and engagement. Together, we will continue building stronger, healthier, and more connected communities.

Heidi LeBlanc
Department Director

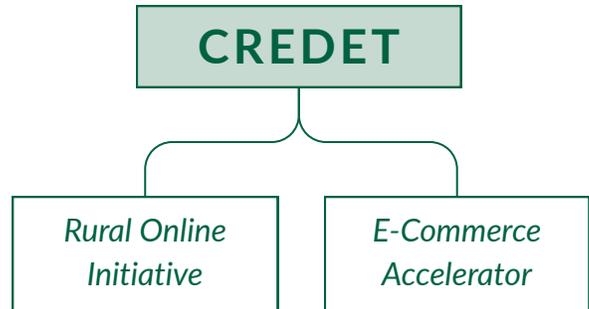


COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The Community & Economic Development workgroup is centered around the newly founded Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies (CREDET) to improve efficiency, expands reach, and strengthens outcome tracking across rural Utah. The two flagship programs operating within CREDET are the Rural Online Initiative (ROI) and the E-Commerce Accelerator (ECA). Together, these programs equip individuals and businesses with durable digital skills that expand economic opportunity without requiring residents to leave their communities.

Center for Rural Economic Development & Emerging Technologies (CREDET)

This center serves as a statewide hub for strengthening rural economies through workforce innovation, entrepreneurship, and applied use of emerging technologies. CREDET integrates research-driven education with Extension’s place-based delivery model to address persistent rural challenges such as unemployment, underemployment, limited job diversity, and barriers to digital participation.



Rural Online Initiative (ROI)

The Rural Online Initiative is dedicated to reducing unemployment and enhancing economic stability in rural Utah. Its mission is to provide residents with the skills and opportunities needed for remote work. By offering comprehensive training and support, ROI fosters economic diversification, supports community resilience, and promotes sustainable development, ensuring that rural communities thrive in a rapidly changing digital economy.

Participation & Completion (January - December 2025)



total participants



course completions



completion rate

Program Outcomes (October 2018 - December 2025)



increased confidence in their value as remote workers



average monthly income increase



felt empowered to pursue remote work



expect an additional 20% income growth within the next year (~\$500 more per month)



planned to seek flexible or remote roles



secured remote jobs within 2.5 months of completion

E-Commerce Accelerator (ECA)

The E-Commerce Accelerator (ECA) is a program that helps small businesses in rural Utah grow through online sales. The ECA is designed to assist agricultural and rural businesses by providing personalized training to navigate the digital world and increase sales revenue through e-commerce.

24

rural business completed the E-Commerce Accelerator during the year

45

businesses now operate fully functioning e-commerce websites

Since October 2023, ECA clients have generated

over \$1 million

in new online sales across rural Utah.

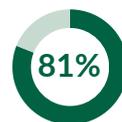


of participating businesses reported increased sales revenue



report revenue growth and plan to hire additional employees

Post-program evaluations show that digital skills are retained and actively applied:



reported higher e-commerce skill levels



reported increased confidence using digital tools



intended to sustain their e-commerce strategies long-term





EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMS

The Emergency Preparedness workgroup works to equip individuals, families, and communities with the knowledge and skills needed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. Through resources found on the website and community partnerships, this group promotes disaster readiness, risk reduction, and resilient response strategies.

Empower Yourself Through Self-Defense

The Empower Yourself Through Self-Defense program was developed in 2022 by Utah State University faculty with the support and input of martial arts professionals and was reviewed by a domestic violence prevention expert. It was designed to fill the gap in accessible, research-based self-defense education and has been actively delivered from 2022 to the present.



The Empower Yourself Through Self-Defense curriculum emphasizes empowerment, situational awareness, de-escalation, and teaches practical self-defense strategies. The curriculum is comprised of a 34-page instructor's guide which includes information on how to prepare for and teach the class, a list of required equipment, and an in-depth lesson guide to ensure the information is delivered correctly, a 49-slide PowerPoint, and handouts to reinforce the curriculum content.

Since 2022, Empower Yourself through Self-Defense has been offered to:

654 attendees during **44** class sessions

Serving: **Statewide, Nationally & Internationally**

Including 11 Utah counties, 3 states, and 2 countries

"This class was life changing!"

"I feel so much better with this useful information."

"The information and practice are empowering!"

"Thank you so much! So informative and [the class] taught great useful information that I can implement. I would love more training!"

"This is the most important class, everyone needs this"



FINANCE PROGRAMS

The Finance workgroup promotes financial literacy, homeownership education, and resource navigation. Through in-person and virtual workshops and webinars, individualized guidance, and community partnerships, these programs provide individuals and families with the knowledge and tools to manage budgets, build savings, reduce debt, and achieve long-term financial stability. By fostering informed decision-making and economic resilience, it strengthens both households and communities throughout Utah.

Empowering Financial Wellness

Empowering Financial Wellness (EFW) is a vital initiative by Utah State University, funded by the Utah Department of Workforce Services, to tackle financial stress caused by the pandemic, record-high inflation, and skyrocketing housing costs.

This program offers free, research-based financial education to combat economic uncertainty through award-winning tools and resources, including self-paced online courses, a debt elimination tool, media outreach, and customizable webinars and classes in both English and Spanish. By equipping individuals with practical skills and knowledge, we help foster financial stability and informed decision-making across Utah.

Extension
UtahStateUniversity. 

Empowering Financial Wellness

Two months after completing an EFW program activity, participants:



Serving: **Statewide**

Budget Mastermind Workshops

Budget Mastermind Workshops are 5-hour interactive, small-group sessions that help participants build practical budgeting skills through guided discussion and real-life application. Participants gain confidence, improve money management behaviors, and leave with clear, actionable financial next steps.

190 participants across all sessions



"I was pleasantly surprised with how much I learned and feel like I can apply it."

Webinars & In-Person Classes

287 weekly webinars and in-person classes

4,325 participants

"I felt so empowered! My financial situation is NOT hopeless!"

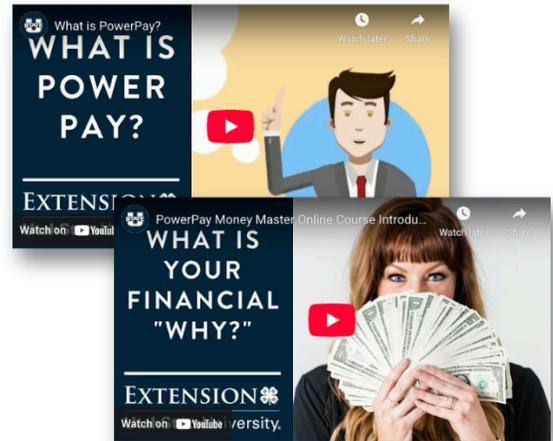
"I want to identify how I see money and why. Then find where I can fix those habits to have a better relationship with money."

PowerPay Debt Elimination Tool

PowerPay will give you the tools to develop a personalized, self-directed debt elimination plan. Discover how quickly you can become debt free, and how much you can save in interest costs by following your debt reduction plan.

367,795 user accounts created since inception

46,393 plans created



"It has helped me reduce \$11,253 worth of interest in a year of use."

Resources Developed



Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

One in four eligible tax preparers in Utah may miss out on refundable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program helps increase the number of qualifying individuals and families claim these credits by offering free tax return preparation services to low-income, disabled, and limited-English-speaking taxpayers.

Partnered with the Westminster Tax Clinic

39 households served →

The amounts saved in tax preparation fees and received in state and federal refunds likely yields a total economic impact of

\$128,110

Serving: Summit & Wasatch Counties

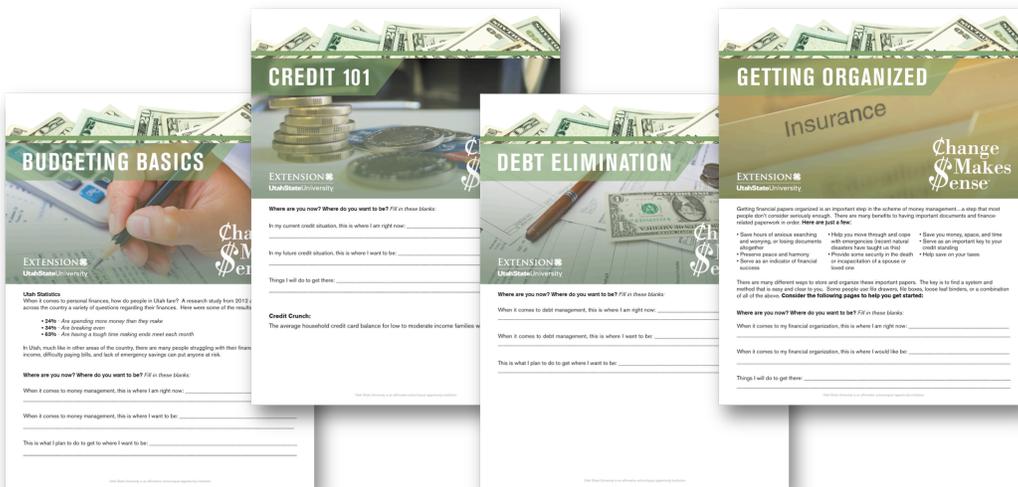
Change Makes \$ense

Courses on the principles of how to eliminate debt, the basics of credit and budgeting, as well as how to get finances organized. Classes were offered to residents at a Substance Abuse Center in Tooele County.

“Residents have been talking about budgets several times. One lady has paid off her debt of \$1500 in just 6 months.”



participants reported plans to implement at least one new behavior





FOOD PRESERVATION & FOOD SAFETY PROGRAMS

The Food Preservation & Food Safety workgroup educates individuals and families on safe food handling and preservation techniques. Through hands-on workshops, demonstrations, and research-based resources, the program helps communities prevent foodborne illness, extend the shelf life of foods, and maintain nutritional quality. By combining practical skills with evidence-based guidance, this initiative promotes food safety, self-sufficiency, and healthier homes across Utah.

Preserve the Harvest

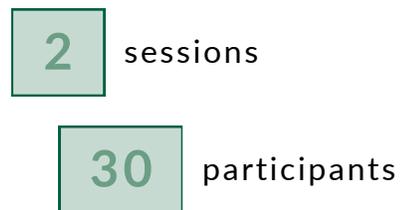
The Preserve the Harvest program provides research-based guidance on safe home food preservation, offering trusted resources and classes on canning, freezing, drying, fermenting, and storage to help individuals confidently and safely preserve food using scientifically tested methods.



Serving: **Statewide**

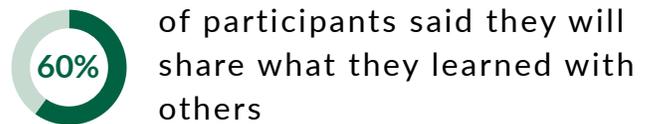
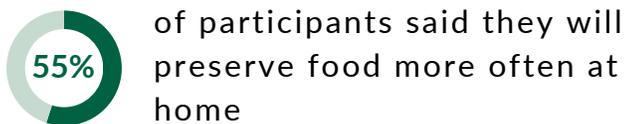
Master Food Preserver

The Master Food Preserver course was developed by Utah State University to provide expert level knowledge of research-based food preservation practices to Extension faculty and community members. These classes include hands-on learning to practice approved recipes and techniques for water bath canning, pressure canning, freezing, freeze drying, and dehydration.



Serving: **Statewide**

High School Student Food Preservation Workshops



Serving: **Davis County**

"It was amazing and really opened my eyes to preservation"

"It was a super fun hands on lesson and I learned something new every time I participate in this!"



MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

The Mental Health workgroup promotes mental well-being through education, stigma reduction, and access to resources. By offering evidence-based programs, community partnerships, and practical tools, the team supports individuals and families in managing stress, building resilience, and fostering emotional health. These efforts strengthen personal well-being and contribute to healthier, more connected communities across Utah.

Crafting Change Empowerment Workshops

The Crafting Change workshops empower participants through creativity and connection. Each workshop blends practical crafting activities with intentional lessons on coping skills, resilience, and well-being. These workshops create safe, supportive spaces where people can learn, express themselves, and strengthen their emotional and social health. After engaging in the workshops, participants report increased confidence, stronger coping strategies, and deeper community connections.

Since inception in March 2025, we have served:

425 adults **316** youth

Serving: **Davis, Duchesne, Uintah & Wayne Counties**



Leadership, Education, Advocacy, and Prevention (LEAP) Coalition

The Summit County USU Extension office partnered with the Summit County Health Department to start two youth substance use coalitions with 43 total students at South Summit Middle School. These coalitions developed and implemented multiple prevention campaigns that reached over 400 students.

*Collaboration between
USU Extension Summit County &
the Summit County Health
Department*

Serving: **Summit County**

Prevention Campaigns

reached over **400** students



played a key role in reducing youth substance use in Summit County.

Out of the Darkness Suicide Prevention Walk

The USU Extension offices in Carbon & Emery Counties co-sponsored a suicide prevention walk in solidarity with those affected by suicide. The event featured speakers, performances, and resources booths. The event helped increase suicide awareness, increase community connectedness, and catalyze support for suicide prevention.

200 community members



Skyward: Youth Mental Health Through Dark Skies & Awe

Skyward is a Utah State University Extension youth mental health program that uses dark sky experiences, astronomy, and creative reflection to strengthen stress resilience, emotional regulation, and social connection among teens. Grounded in emerging research on awe, attention restoration, and nature-based mental health, Skyward blends STEM learning with social-emotional development in rural and outdoor settings. Programming included guided night sky observations, hands-on astronomy activities, reflective writing, and facilitated group dialogue.

Pilot programs were conducted at Great Basin National Park & on the Grand Mesa [in collaboration with The Nature Connection].

 Participants reported **reduced stress**, **increased calm and perspective**, **stronger peer connection**, and **renewed curiosity** about science and the natural world.

Serving: **Utah & Colorado Youth**



Granite Communities Youth Court

USU Extension facilitates the Granite Communities Youth Court in Salt Lake County. Youth Court helps referred youth take accountability and learn from their mistakes through hearings led by a panel of peers serving as Judge, Clerk, Bailiff, and Jury. Youth panelists build leadership skills and may earn school credit. Referred youth complete required activities—such as community involvement, prosocial programming, and tutoring or afterschool supports—and are paired with a mentor to help them stay on track.

“It made me think about my future and what I need to get there.”

“It helped me in school and in general.”

“I think it was helpful to me because I learned to use my coping skills better.”

106 hearings

37 youth panelist trained

447 service hours provided by youth panelist

Serving: **Salt Lake County**

Resilience Education Adventures for Life

In partnership with the Utah National Guard and the Department of Public Safety, USU Extension offers resilience-focused, adventure-based learning for youth, including rappelling, team challenges, survival first aid, and rock climbing. These experiences provide healthy risk-taking opportunities and teach stress management skills to 3rd–12th graders in Salt Lake County throughout the year.

91% of youth agreed that it helped them understand why they should not use drugs or alcohol

n=366 youth

Serving: **Salt Lake County**

Project CREST Youth Classes

Salt Lake County Extension partnered with **24** schools to deliver **126** resilience-building lessons for students during family nights, reaching over **2,250** youth.



Serving: **Salt Lake County**



NUTRITION & NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Nutrition & Nutrition Education workgroup advances healthy eating habits and nutrition knowledge for individuals and families. By providing research-based education, these programs promotes practical strategies for nutritious eating across the lifespan. It also addresses food insecurity through partnerships, community action, and outreach, helping Utah communities access healthy foods while building long-term wellness and stronger, more resilient families.

Create Better Health HUB

In 2025, Create Better Health strategically shifted to a HUB model encompassing various food security efforts, including SNAP-Education, SNAP Outreach, among other notable programs. Notably, SNAP-Education funding was eliminated nationally due to the One Big Beautiful Bill, while many programs sunsetted at the end of the federal fiscal year (September 2025), Create Better Health (SNAP-Ed) was able to extend through December 2025.



Serving: **Statewide**

Create Better Health SNAP-Ed

The goal of Create Better Health (SNAP-Ed) is to help people cook healthy meals on a budget, buy and prepare whole foods, understand food labels, practice safety in the kitchen, and much more. Create Better Health is designed to increase the knowledge, skill set, and overall well-being of those it serves.

2,159 adult participants

After completing the Create Better Health class series, adults reported that they:



increased their fruit intake
(n = 201)



indicated they were physically active for at least 30 minutes more days per week
(n = 201)



increased their vegetable intake
(n = 203)



stretched their food dollars to last the month more often
(n = 188)



"I have a lot of health problems and this class has helped me get the nutrition I need. I have learned how to pick healthy food and prepare it. MyPlate has taught me all the food groups I need to use."

9,023

youth participants

After completing the Captain Create MyPlate series, youth (3rd - 6th graders) reported that they:



ate more vegetables
(n = 739)



ate more fruit
(n = 732)



chose healthy snacks more often
(n = 731)



did physical activity more often
(n = 730)



"My daughter made the dip for breakfast the next morning. It's such a relief to have a healthy recipe she can make on her own with pantry staples and a spoon!"

New & Upcoming Projects

Create Healthy Pantries Pilot

Create Healthy Pantries Pilot offers free, hands-on workshops on budget-friendly cooking, meal planning, family nutrition, and kids' cooking, serving clients of Cache Community Pantry (Cache County) and Tabitha's Way Food Pantry (Utah County).

SNAP Outreach

Create Better Health SNAP Outreach connects individuals and families to SNAP benefits and resources to improve food security and access to healthy foods. By providing education, guidance, and community-based support, the program helps Utahns apply for and use SNAP with confidence and dignity.

National Nutrition Certification Program (NNCP)

The National Nutrition Certification Program is an online program that builds nutrition knowledge and culinary skills, offering educator training, student career exploration, and advanced professional certification.

Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program is conducted by the Cooperative Extension System through Land-grant Universities in all U.S. states. It is content- and relationship-based, learner-centered, culturally relevant and dynamic. Education is geared to food costs, and to the shopping, preparation, safety and storage of foods. This model supports EFNEP participants' efforts toward self-sufficiency and nutritional health and well-being.

Serving: Salt Lake, Davis, Weber and Utah Counties

427

adult reached directly through nutrition education

Adults reported:



improved diet, including consuming an extra cup of fruits and vegetables



improved food safety practices



better food resource management practices



positive change in physical activities

19

youth reached directly through nutrition education*

Youth reported:



acquired skills to be food secure or gained knowledge



improved their physical activity practices or gained knowledge



improved their abilities to choose foods according to the Federal Dietary Guidelines or gained knowledge



used safe food handling practices more often or gained knowledge

*Youth participation decreased after our long-time youth nutrition educator retired in May 2024. While the position remains unfilled, we plan to repost it in 2026 and are committed to rebuilding and expanding youth programming.

NourishEd

NourishEd is a PSE-focused Extension program that combines nutrition education with hands-on gardening, food tasting, and distribution of rescued or surplus produce. Delivered in four-week series at community and school sites, the program pairs learning with real food access to reduce barriers and increase exposure to fruits and vegetables.

Serving: **Box Elder, Davis, Millard, and Utah Counties**

County	Number of Families Served	Pounds of Produce Distributed <i>Estimated</i>
Box Elder	50 families	315 pounds
Davis County	20 families	177 pounds
Millard County	11 families	279 pounds
Utah County	5 families	948 pounds

NourishSmart

NourishSmart is a program that teaches youth and communities how to reduce food waste, use food more wisely, and strengthen food security through practical, hands-on education.

137 trained educators across **15** Utah counties

95% reported that the training was relevant to their work

61% indicated an intent to implement the curriculum

57 youth participated

64% reported intent to change their personal food waste behaviors

68% plan to share strategies with family or friends

NourishHealth

NourishHealth is an innovative, cost-conscious nutrition education program that promotes plant-forward eating through globally inspired, budget-friendly recipes. Using affordable pantry staples like beans, lentils, whole grains, eggs, and tofu, the program demonstrates how to prepare flavorful meals costing \$5-\$10 for a family of four. Delivered in-person and virtually, it combines evidence-based education with live cooking demonstrations, meal planning, pantry management, and food waste reduction, supported by a peer-reviewed curriculum and more than 60 tested recipes.



Participants reported **increased confidence** in preparing plant-forward meals, **greater comfort** using unfamiliar but affordable ingredients, and **improved skills** in meal planning, pantry organization, and food resourcefulness.

Food Security Council

The Utah Food Security Council (FSC) aims to improve food access and security in Utah. It unites various stakeholders to provide policy recommendations, promote healthy eating, and coordinate statewide nutrition education efforts.





PHYSICAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

The Physical Health workgroup encourages movement and exercise through accessible, community-based programs. Grounded in research and responsive to local needs, this team promotes lifelong physical activity by providing practical education, inclusive programming, and partnerships that reduce barriers to participation. By helping individuals and families build sustainable movement habits, the program supports overall health, chronic disease prevention, and stronger, more vibrant communities throughout Utah.

Marathon Kids: Statewide Virtual Program

Marathon Kids is a non-profit organization encouraging young people to move more throughout the day. Although the main audience of this program is youth, adults are encouraged to participate as well. Activities such as running, walking, or any type of heart pumping exercise count towards mileage which is tracked in a digital platform. Participants complete one marathon and then move to the next.

Serving: **Statewide**

419 total participants

17,008 total miles of activity completed

Outdoor Odyssey (formerly *Becoming an Outdoors Woman*)

53 total participants



believe that spending time outdoors can improve mental and physical health

“This program gave me the confidence to try new outdoor activities I had previously felt unsure about. The supportive environment made it easier to step out of my comfort zone, and I left the trip feeling empowered, more connected to nature, and inspired to continue exploring the outdoors.”

Serving: **Washington County**

Tai Chi

“I feel calmer and more aware of my body after Tai Chi each week.”

“I feel more confident in my ability to walk around without tripping”

Tai Chi is an evidence-based course for fall prevention and arthritis. This is a free community class led by instructors certified by the Tai Chi for Health Institute. Tai Chi is a popular exercise often called "meditation in motion." It is a series of movements performed in a slow, focused manner accompanied by deep breathing. Tai Chi is a low impact exercise suitable for all ages and fitness levels. Seated options are available.

Serving: **Statewide**

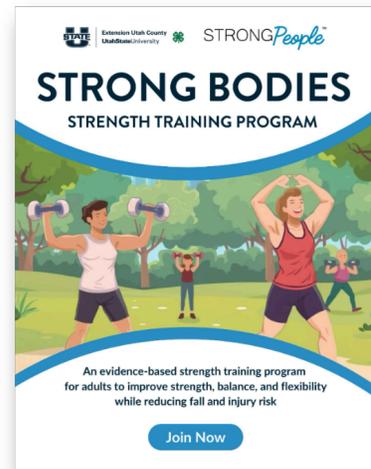
StrongBodies

The StrongBodies Strength Training Program is an evidence-based program designed to improve muscular strength, balance, flexibility, and endurance for adults aged 50 and older. This class is important not only for physical health but also for social well-being, as it provides a supportive, structured environment where seniors at high risk of isolation and loneliness can build friendships and engage in meaningful activities.

Serving: **Beaver, Davis, Weber & Utah Counties**

Participants reported following completion of the 12-week series,

- **47%** total increase in upper body strength
- **53%** total increase in lower body strength
- **437%** total increase overall for all exercises



Davis County Wellness Walks

After attending the wellness walks,



of participants felt physically better



of participants reported improved emotional well-being



participants felt more connected to nature



participants experienced a greater sense of gratitude

Serving: **Davis County**

Pickleball

Minersville School 4th-8th grade students were taught basic Pickleball rules and skills, practiced Pickleball drills, and competed in game play.



Student Pickleball players **gained lifetime sport knowledge and skills** that will allow them to continue enjoying and engaging in a fun physical activity.

Serving: **Beaver County**



RELATIONSHIPS PROGRAMS

The Couples & Family Relationships workgroup strengthens families by delivering research-based education that enhances relationship skills to all. Through community partnerships, evidence-informed curricula, and statewide programming, this working group equips individuals, couples, and families with practical tools to improve communication, strengthen parenting practices, navigate conflict, and build resilience. By fostering healthy family dynamics and enduring relationships, the program contributes to individual well-being and stronger communities throughout Utah.

Marriage Celebration

The Marriage Celebration is an annual event designed to strengthen relationships through workshops and activities. The celebration features expert speakers and interactive sessions to help couples engage and learn.

556 attendees

Serving: **Statewide & Nationally**
Including 19 states and Canada



"It's all too easy to just coast along, especially in my relationship where my wife and I are very comfortable with one another and things seem to be going along well. The event...made me realize that by investing even further in the relationship that our marriage relationship can become even deeper and stronger...I plan to make a more concerted effort to connect with my spouse and be more intentional in our relationship." - Marriage Celebration Attendee

Hidden Gems Adventure Guides

The USU Hidden Gems Adventure Guides are free online resources with one-hour activities that promote quality time and healthy relationships. They include discussion questions to enhance communication and problem solving skills and are also adapted for single adults.

Between 2020-2025:

145 published guides

over **108,000** downloads

Serving: **Nationally**



Healthy Relationships Utah Statewide Classes

Healthy Relationships Utah offers free research-based workshops throughout Utah.



476 course offerings

6,380 participants

Serving: **Statewide**

Utah Marriage Commission

The Utah Marriage Commission strengthens marriages and families through podcasts, webinars, and e-Courses. It collaborates with community partners to teach healthy relationship skills and techniques for a stable family life.

Stronger Marriage Connection Podcast

47 podcast episodes

41,474 downloads



Serving: **Nationally**

Webinars

24 webinars

2,596 participants

e-Courses

The Utah Marriage Commission offers seven on-demand relationship courses and 100 quick lessons for couples, parents, and personal growth.

507 e-course participants

Raising Amazing Youth Parenting Series

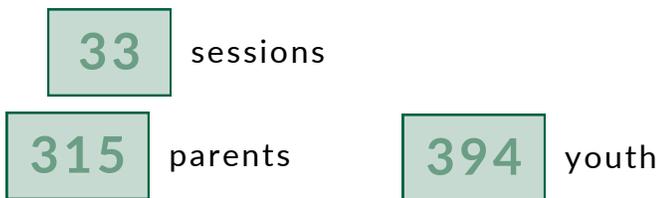
Raising Amazing Youth is a series of research-based workshops for parents designed to support positive youth development. Workshops address key topics including digital responsibility, resilience, bullying prevention, and managing difficult behaviors.



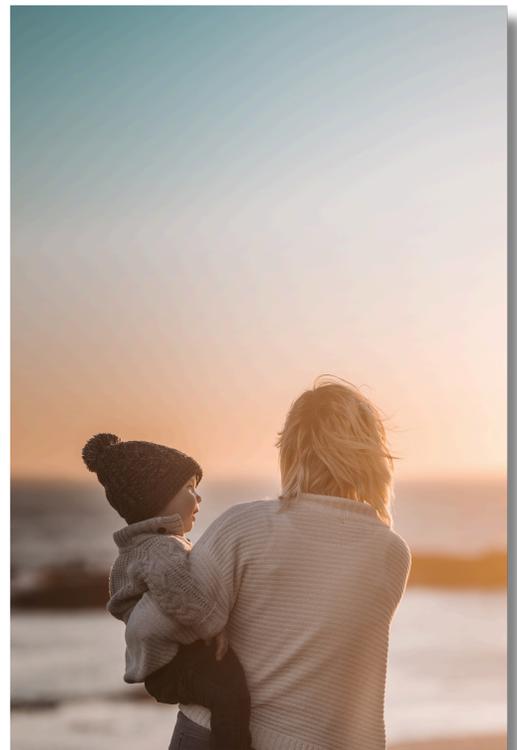
Serving: Salt Lake County

Common Sense Parenting® Workshops

The Common Sense Parenting workshop series builds core parenting skills using easy-to-learn, evidence-based techniques. Content focuses on communication, discipline, decision-making, relationships, self-control, and school success, helping families support positive youth outcomes at home and in school.



Serving: Salt Lake County



Guiding Good Choices® Workshop

Guiding Good Choices is a five-week prevention program for parents of children ages 9-14. The program reduces risk factors for adolescent substance use by strengthening family bonds, improving communication, teaching proactive behavior management, and equipping youth with peer-resistance skills.



Serving: Salt Lake County



SEWING, TEXTILES & HOME ARTS PROGRAMS

The Sewing & Home Arts workgroup promotes traditional skills like sewing, quilting, and other home arts. Through hands-on workshops, conferences and community classes, this working group fosters creativity, self-sufficiency, and cultural heritage. By teaching practical skills, the program strengthens community connections, supports personal well-being, and sustains the rich traditions that enrich homes and families throughout Utah.

Textile and Clothing Training

The annual Textile and Clothing Training provides hands-on sewing and textile instruction for FCS teachers and 4-H leaders and volunteers. Participants build practical skills they can take back to their communities while engaging in creative projects that support mindfulness, reduce stress, and foster a sense of accomplishment. The program strengthens both technical skills and well-being, benefiting educators, volunteers, and the communities they serve.

Serving: **Statewide**

100 participants



This is my 4th year attending and I love it so much! It is always well organized and relevant...I really appreciate that USU organizes this every year.

Sewing and Textile Conference

Serving: **Washington County**

74 participants

Participants reported strong social and emotional benefits from the sewing conference.



95% indicated improved mental health or overall mood*



61% identified networking as a key benefit*



61% reported strengthened friendships*

*Multiple responses allowed.

"I loved that there was enough time scheduled to complete each project! I plan on using the bitsy boxes, rope basket, 3D printed sewing equipment, and the service project to teach essential skills to my sewing students this year! I appreciated that the conference projects were focused on developing the skills of beginning and intermediate skilled sewers. This was my 2nd year attending and I left feeling inspired, refreshed, and excited to teach sewing again. Thank you for putting on such a great event!"



SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION PROGRAMS

The Substance Use Prevention workgroup advances prevention, harm-reduction, and community wellness across Utah. Through the signature program, the HEART Initiative, this team delivers trauma-informed, healing-centered programming and partners locally and nationally to address the opioid epidemic and other public health challenges. By combining education, research, and community engagement, the program strengthens protective factors, supports recovery, and promotes long-term health and resilience statewide.

HEART Initiative

The Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, and Teaching (HEART) Initiative is a statewide Utah State University Extension effort launched in 2018 to address the opioid overdose epidemic and related behavioral health challenges. What began as a multidisciplinary pilot has evolved into a comprehensive Extension platform delivering evidence-based prevention, harm reduction, workforce development, and community resilience programming. Through strong community partnerships and applied research, HEART supports rural and underserved Utah communities in strengthening prevention systems, expanding the behavioral health workforce, and improving overall wellbeing.



HEALTH EXTENSION
Advocacy. Research. Teaching.



Stigma Reduction & Harm Reduction



Strengthening Communities Ties



Prevention & Education



Resilience Building

Serving: **Statewide**

Quick Facts

109 Publications and educational products	58 Scholarly presentations offered	\$4,478,765 Grant funding secured
127 Virtual lessons taught	49,193 Virtual participants reached	2,937 Naloxone kits distributed
579 In-person lessons taught	13,350 In-person participants reached	1,298 Collaborative partners engaged

HEART Bunch Videos

11 videos created



Be Epic: Escape the Vape

Be Epic, Escape the Vape delivers e-cigarette prevention programming to youth in rural communities. The program is designed to reduce tobacco use and prevent vaping initiation among youth, where rates of youth e-cigarette use are elevated.

~48,000 participants reached virtually

Serving: Carbon, Emery, & Grand Counties

TriCounty Overdose Prevention Program (TOPP)

TOPP is an initiative focused on reducing opioid misuse and overdose in rural communities across Utah's TriCounty region. TOPP works to strengthen community resilience, expand prevention education, and increase access to resources that help individuals and families avoid opioid-related harm.

~4,200 participants reached

Serving: Daggett, Duchesne, & Uintah Counties

Guiding Good Choices

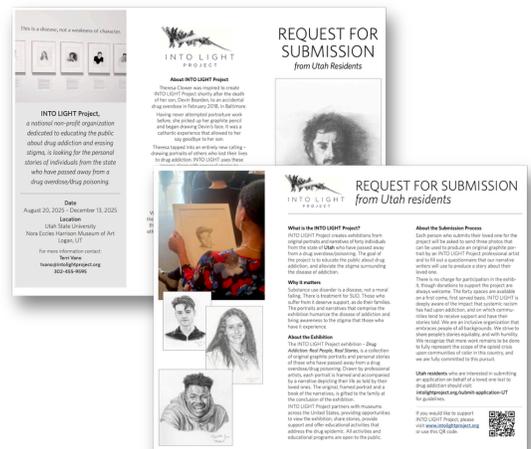
Guiding Good Choices helps parents strengthen communication and reduce youth substance-use risk through a brief, evidence-based workshop series.

8 educators trained

Into the Light Project

For International Overdose Awareness Day, USU Extension brought "A Light to Remember" to Logan, featuring the "Into Light Project" at the Nora Eccles Harrison Museum. The project featured powerful public exhibitions that shared the stories and portraits of individuals who have lost their lives to substance use disorder, helping to increase awareness and transform the conversation around substance use prevention.

Serving: Cache County



FACULTY & STAFF

CALLIE ADAMS | Garfield | Extension Associate Professor
TROY ALLAN | Statewide | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
RYAN BENALLY | San Juan | Extension Assistant Professor
NAOMI BROWER | Weber | Extension Professor
STEPHANIE CARLSON | Weber | Extension Assistant Professor
KATE CHAPPELL | Wayne | Extension Assistant Professor
AMANDA CHRISTENSEN | Morgan | Extension Professor
DARLENE CHRISTENSEN | Tooele | Extension Associate Professor
SHANNON CROMWELL | Sanpete | Extension Professor
ELIZABETH DAVIS | Kane | Extension Associate Professor
JENNA DYCKMAN | Cache | Extension Assistant Professor
ANNA GILLIAM | Sevier | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
JARED HAWKINS | Summit | Extension Assistant Professor
MARY ANNA HENKE | Millard | Extension Program Coordinator
PAUL HILL | Washington | Extension Professor
MATT HUNTINGTON | Salt Lake & Tooele | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
CINDY JENKINS | Utah | Extension Assistant Professor
MELANIE JEWKES | Salt Lake | Extension Professor
TIM KEADY | Cache & Box Elder | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
KRISTEN KOCI | Box Elder | Extension Assistant Professor
EMMA LOPEZ | Juab | Extension Assistant Professor
TRICIA MATHIS | Wasatch | Extension Educator
CARA MURRAY | Uintah | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
GABRIELA MURZA | Utah | Professional Practice Extension Associate Professor
CINDY NELSON | Beaver | Extension Professor
LEA PALMER | Statewide | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
EMMA PARKHURST | Davis | Professional Practice Extension Associate Professor
CHRISTINA PAY | Carbon | Extension Associate Professor
YVETTE REA | Duchesne | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
LISA SCHAIKER | Salt Lake | Extension Associate Professor
ANDREA SCHMUTZ | Washington | Extension Associate Professor
CAROL SPRINGER | Piute | Extension Program Coordinator
MARIA JOSE VELASCO BURGOS | Grand | Extension Assistant Professor
ALICE WADLEY | Emery | Extension Instructor
TARYN WAHLQUIST | Iron | Extension Assistant Professor
SADIE WILDE | Davis & Weber | Professional Practice Extension Assistant Professor
ASHLEY YAUGHER | Carbon & Emery | Professional Practice Extension Associate Professor

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