Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) programs at Utah State University Extension are all about families and helping them solve the complex and diverse challenges they face in today’s world. Research-based information is combined with practical know-how by FCS professionals to create current, relevant programs and resources that families can use. Whether delivered through a traditional or online class, a blog, website or Facebook page, families can access the information they need. For information on health and wellness, building strong relationships, preparing nutritious meals, managing finances, caring for a home or dealing with an emergency, turn to your county USU Extension office for help.

– Ann Henderson
Extension Associate Professor
Utah Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences past president
RESEARCH-BACKED INFORMATION ASSISTS WITH FOOD SAFETY

Extension provides reliable information for Utah families interested in home food preservation and storage. Canning and food storage classes attracted 1,836 participants last year. More than 550 pressure canner gauges were checked for safety, a service that is available in many county Extension offices. In addition, 63 volunteers were trained as Master Food Preservers.

PRESSURE CANNER GAUGES
More than 550 gauges were checked for safety

EXTENSION PREPARES UTAHNS FOR EMERGENCIES

The Utah Prepare Conference, held at the South Towne Expo Center in Sandy, is Utah’s largest preparedness conference and expo and includes speakers, workshops and emergency preparedness vendors. Sponsored by USU Extension, the conference began in 2009 as a way to help people learn what they can do to be in charge in the event of an emergency, even when there is much out of their control. At the 2014 fair, there were more than 1,500 participants, 27 presenters and 75 vendors. Participants were taught what necessary items to have on hand and the skills they need to better “ride out the storm.”

VIRTUAL VITA PROGRAM MAKES TAX ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The virtual Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program was developed by a team of Extension county faculty to make income tax assistance available to rural Utah sites that lacked certified volunteers. Working with Extension offices in Grand, Wasatch and Summit counties, tax returns were prepared for 144 low-income households through the program. Those individuals received $196,021 in refunds and saved an estimated $30,384 in tax preparation costs, for a total benefit of $226,405.

In addition, Dean Miner, Extension faculty in Utah County, was invited to teach IRS personnel about the process in an effort to expand the filing method to those in need. Data for 2014 show 17,038 returns were completed via some form of virtual VITA. Assuming VITA was not previously available to these taxpayers, preparation cost savings alone to these households is $3,578,000. Including average refund amounts would add another $39,200,000 to the total.

RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION STRENGTHENS INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES

Family relationships are valued in Utah, and Extension plays an important role in helping families strengthen those relationships. Whether it’s learning how to blend a stepfamily, strengthen a marriage or raise a child, more than 11,300 people participated in family-strengthening classes last year.

For instance 2,623 teens and single adults have learned how to follow their hearts without losing their minds by participating in “How to Avoid Falling for a Jerk/Jerkette” dating education classes.