USU Extension Honored with Best of State Award

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2018 Awards
• Adult Education
• Community Education
• Youth Organization

2017 Award
• Adult Education

Utah State University Extension was recently named Best of State winner for adult education in Utah. The Best of State Awards recognize outstanding individuals, organizations and businesses in Utah. Nominees are judged on achievement in their field of endeavor; innovation or creativity in approaches, techniques, methods or processes; and contribution to improving the quality of life in Utah.

Ken White, USU Extension vice president, said that as a land-grant institution, USU Extension has offered research-backed education and outreach for more than 100 years.

“Our programs have a long history of showing tremendous impacts for Utah residents,” he said. “We have the unique opportunity of having an Extension office located in 28 counties in Utah, so we are able to reach a wide range of people and their varying needs with research-based, unbiased information.”

USU Extension offers non-credit courses statewide in a variety of areas, including agriculture and natural resources, gardening, home, family and food, and Utah 4-H and youth. In addition, Extension operates the Ogden Botanical Gardens, Swaner Preserve and EcoCenter, the USU Botanical Center and has partnerships with several other centers and gardens around the state.

According to Roslynn Brain, sustainable communities Extension specialist based in Moab, it is not surprising that USU Extension is an award winner for adult education.

“In my county, we have seen tremendous impacts from our programs in classes ranging from water harvesting to branding a local food movement, and these same types of impacts are occurring all across the state,” she said.

One program that has been particularly successful in Moab is a community permaculture design initiative called Bee Inspired Gardens (beeinspired.usu.edu). Permaculture is a design philosophy that mimics the patterns and relationships found in nature. The initiative was formed as a partnership between a broad range of partners from USU Extension to small-scale educational nonprofits. Several hundred volunteers have participated in designing, implementing and learning about the gardens and their focus on water conservation, pollinator health and perennial food and forage systems.

Brain attributes the high participation in the program to a growing interest in resilient, regenerative living as more people are wanting to move away from the burdens of consumerism.

“Living a sustainable lifestyle is made difficult by our consumerism society where companies generally push the message that happiness must be bought,” she said. “What many are coming to realize is that living a simple lifestyle with less debt, more interaction with nature and less stuff to manage seems to better equate with a happy lifestyle. It is really rewarding to see people learn these concepts.”
White said this is just one of hundreds of USU Extension programs that are teaching important life skills and helping improve the quality of life in the state.

“Our programs include everything from financial management, relationship education, and nutrition to water conservation, small business development and pest management,” he said. “We also endeavor to reach an ethnically diverse audience. We are a relevant resource for people of all backgrounds and interests, and we are truly honored to be recognized for our programs with this prestigious Best of State Award.”

As a 2017 Best of State winner, USU Extension will be recognized at an awards gala held May 17 at the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City. For further information, visit bestofstate.org.

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