



Making a difference in the lives of Americans

Extension family-focused programs are making a positive difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

—2015 Battelle Study

Extension responds to some of the most pressing social challenges facing families and communities, making a positive difference in the lives of millions of Americans.

That was the conclusion of a new study by Battelle—the world’s largest nonprofit research and development organization. *The 2015 Battelle Study: Analysis of the Value of Family & Consumer Sciences Extension in the North Central Region* looked at programs in 12 states, including Wisconsin, designed to help people achieve a better quality of life. Extension focuses on building knowledge and skills that people use to make informed decisions about their well-being, relationships and resources.

University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living plays an important role

University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living contributes significantly to Extension’s overall effectiveness, according to the report. Battelle’s key findings about Extension work nationally are strengthened by the impacts of UW-Extension Family Living educational programs in Wisconsin. Last year, 453,000 state residents participated in family and nutrition education programs.

Key findings

Family-focused programming results in substantial economic returns to the nation.

- In Wisconsin, Family Living nutrition education programs make it possible for low-income families to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits at local farmers’ markets. Working with partners, UW-Extension contributed to a 46% increase in SNAP benefits redeemed at farmers’ markets in 2014 compared to 2012. The benefits for local farmers? SNAP redemptions at farmers’ markets in Wisconsin in 2014 totaled nearly \$250,000.
- Since 2009, UW-Extension Family Living educators have worked with local Head Start agencies to make financial information more accessible to Wisconsin’s most financially vulnerable through *Money Smart in Head Start*. In 2014, about 2,500 households across 18 counties received *Money Smart in Head Start* newsletters. The majority of households reported that reading the newsletters helped them achieve a range of positive financial behaviors, including saving and paying down debt.

Family Living Programs Impact Report

Makes a positive difference in behaviors and shaping policy.

- For the past 20 years, Family Living has worked with family court commissioners and judges to conduct research-based educational programs for divorcing and separating parents to help them co-parent effectively. Evaluations showed the majority of participating parents found the co-parenting class to be more useful than other sources of information. In a number of Wisconsin counties, the courts now mandate that separating parents attend Family Living co-parenting classes.
- Family Living educators contributed to community change that helped families become more physically active. One educator worked with partners to combat children's lack of physical activity by promoting safe routes to school. Two school districts implemented Bike/Walk To School Day events, and neighborhood walkability and bikability assessments.

Utilizes the most effective educational materials available.

- Interest in home food preservation and concern about food safety is drawing increased numbers of Wisconsin residents to Family Living food safety and preservation classes. In 2013 and 2014, 53 Family Living educators reached more than 110,000 individuals across the state with the latest research-based information on preserving food safely.
- Family Living developed new approaches to help parents tap into the benefits of social media to improve parent/child relationships. In 2014, over 3,100 parents took part in these programs.

- To prepare Wisconsin children for lifelong success, UW-Extension Family Living educators sought out the most effective "brain-building" programs from around the world for Wisconsin families to use with their young children. After careful review, Dr. Myrna B. Shure's *Raising a Thinking Child* was selected. A group of educators worked with Dr. Shure to adapt the program for Wisconsin families. Evaluation showed that participating parents gained skills, children's behavior improved and family life was better.

Partners with others to leverage resources and reach people as effectively as possible.

- Working with partners, Family Living has helped Wisconsin achieve consistent increases in school and student participation in the school breakfast program. Latest data indicate that 74% of schools in Wisconsin that serve school lunch also now offer breakfast.
- In a survey, 80% of local agency partners across Wisconsin said that Extension added value to their work by extending their reach to intended audiences; being better able to connect with learners; and being more responsive and relevant in their programming.

For more information:

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To learn more about the impacts of
Family Living Programs, visit
flp.ces.uwex.edu/wisconsin-impacts/

Focuses on education and prevention—a key difference between Extension and county social services.

- Family Living educators conduct the Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP 10-14) throughout the state. Studies show that for every dollar a community spends on SFP 10-14, it saves \$9.60 in future jail costs, missed work time and time in treatment. Youth attending the program had *significantly fewer behavior problems* in school than youth in a control group, including reduced drug and alcohol abuse.
- Growing obesity rates are a financial burden to all. A USDA study found that educational interventions to encourage Americans to improve their diets may prevent thousands of cases of disease and save between \$4–\$12 billion in health care costs and lost earnings over 10 years. In Wisconsin, around 150 county-based nutrition educators in 68 counties reached nearly 122,000 learners in 2014.

Utilizes extensive train-the-trainer work to multiply the impact of educational efforts.

- Since 2008, Family Living has trained over 560 leaders to conduct Strong Women™ classes—community-based strength training classes for older women. Trained leaders have in turn reached more than 15,000 participants in every corner of the state.
- Partners who received training from Family Living educators about health insurance literacy conducted 630 education and outreach activities reaching more than 12,500 individuals through the end of the first Affordable Care Act enrollment period. More than 11,500 people were subsequently referred for application assistance.