

## 2010-11 PFT Success Report Title: Building Strong Families PFT: Family Development

### The Situation

Strong, stable, and resilient families are crucial to the emotional and physical health and overall well-being of individuals, communities, and society. Family fragmentation has statistically been linked to increased poverty, higher anti-social behaviors among children and youth, and increased costs to taxpayers and employers. The Kansas dissolution rate of marriages was 8.8 percent higher than the U.S. rate in 2009 with the ratio of marriages to divorces lower for the state than the nation (1.8:1 vs 2.0:1). Kansas marital dissolutions in 2009 impacted 9,883 minor children. No information on family dissolutions is available for other types of family structures. K-State Research and Extension is dedicated to disseminating knowledge and teaching skills across six research-based dimensions that build strong families: appreciation and affection for each other, commitment, positive communication, enjoyable time together, spiritual well-being, and coping abilities in time of stress and crises.

### Our Focus in 2010-2011: *Appreciation and Affection for Each Other* and *Family Communication*

Five new resources related to our content focus were created: ***Loving Long Distance: Families Separated by Distance; FamilyTALK: Making It Work; Appreciation: Making Your Family Stronger; ¡Viva La Familia Sana!;*** and ***Father Matters: Why Dads Are Important for Their Children.*** The Family Development PFT members reported delivering a wide variety of family strengthening programs and resources,

often in collaboration with community partners. In some instances, family development information was added to other programs such as a nutrition lesson or a school newsletter. Targeted audiences included preschool to high school students and their parents, general community audiences, parenting groups, religious organizations, farm families, clients from Salvation Army, SRS, homeless shelters, transitional programs, and crisis centers, and military families and veterans. The agents also reported serving families from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

### Outcomes

The following information represents a sampling of programs delivered throughout the state by Family Development PFT members.

#### *Community Family Board Game Night – Sedgwick County*

Twenty Board Game Nights were held in 2011 with an average night's attendance of 60 persons for a total of ~1,200 attendees. Safe Streets Wichita, a non-profit dedicated to making high crime neighborhoods safer, shared this report:

*What we have discovered is that organized board game gatherings encourage family members and neighbors to interact with each other in new ways. The result of which is a closer bond, and a stronger sense of community. We have participated in board game gatherings at a variety of locations – school cafeterias, churches, outdoor neighborhood events, school classrooms and gymnasiums, all of which results in a better understanding of each other*

*and our individual roles in our families and communities.*

## *Celebrate Family Day – Seward County*

Family strengthening information was distributed through brochures and 2,000 flyers with pizza delivery, restaurant table top displays, newspaper articles, and letters sent home with Liberal High School report cards.

Here is a success story:

*As a result of learning about the importance of family meals, a family made a commitment to eat together as a family versus the way they'd been dining – kids in front of TV, parents in the kitchen. Now if Mom is rushed and doesn't follow through, preschool children remind her. They have been eating as a family now for more than a year and have seen many benefits as communicating – keeping in touch with one another.*

## *Workshops using multiple Extension programs – Wyandotte County*

During the past year, the agent reported on delivering *CoupleTALK*, *Stress Reduction*, and *Loving Long Distance* to 131 participants with many having significant family stresses.

Participant comments on anticipated behavioral changes included:

*I will use "I feel..." language to explain difficult situations.*

*I will make sure I am an active listener.*

*(I will) work with my partner to reduce stress amongst each other.*

*(I) understand that my children and spouse are stressed sometimes and need support and not criticisms.*

*(I will) keep in touch with family and friends.*

*(I am) ready to assist others when family members are distant.*

## *FamilyTALK: Making It Work – Statewide workshops for Women in Ag*

This program was delivered to ~100 women involved in family farm operations. Clickers were used in two locations to anonymously gather immediate program impact information. Of the 40 surveyed with clickers, over 90 percent, on the average, indicated that they were likely to increase using each specific communication skill as a result of attending the program.

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