

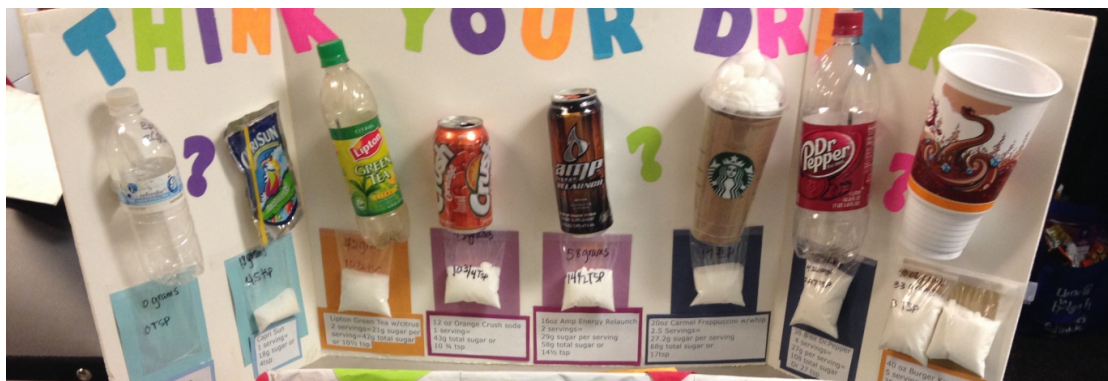


WASHINGTON STATE
UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

IDEAS FOR LIVING

BY THE NUMBERS

- In 2013, Ideas for Living educators provided 122 life-skills classes and nutrition demonstrations (in English or Spanish).
- In 2013, IFL educators provided 345 hours of facilitated learning.
- IFL had more than 4,700 participants in Skagit County.



2014

ISSUE

Since 1995, the Ideas for Living (IFL) program at WSU Skagit County Extension has offered interactive learning experiences for adults on 26 different topics. IFL was developed in response to requests from social service agencies for basic life skills for their clients. At that time, state and national welfare reform policies highlighted the need for basic skills to enhance the lives of people either going back to work or joining the work force for the first time. Topics included money management, parenting, food selection, and shopping. IFL presentations are fast paced, fun, and engaging, and focus on developing self-sufficiency skills such as time management, budgeting, supermarket savvy, and healthy eating.

While IFL is an invaluable program, an updated curriculum was needed. In 2013, a review of the IFL curriculum led to updates in lesson plans to reflect best practices and identified additional topics of relevance to community needs and interests. Research and surveys identified certain life-skills assistance programs that were being offered by other agencies, including budgeting, time management, and parenting, and also identified interest in, and a need for, health and wellness topics, particularly in learning how to use/prepare foods received from food banks. Survey respondents said they were interested in recipe ideas, cooking shortcuts, and feeding young children. The curriculum and educational materials also needed to reflect updates to best practices and access to information on the Internet.

RESPONSE

For IFL, WSU Extension developed a curriculum based on adult learning theory that includes an active hands-on learning component. Audience members include seniors, parents of young children, young adults, and community members. IFL presentations have covered:

- Developing positive eating habits for preschoolers: Parents learn proper food portions and nutrition tips for preschoolers;
- Life Skills and Health and Wellness series: Young adults attending Transitional High School learn techniques for self-sufficiency and healthy living;
- Health and Wellness classes: Participants learn about various nutrition-related topics and are encouraged to implement new knowledge and techniques in their own lives;



QUOTES

"I am eating more fruits and vegetables and have reduced convenience foods. I now read food labels when shopping"

"I offer less juice and more water, [these are] great ideas on how to serve water."

"I tried the recipe at home, and it turned out!"

"This class is totally awesome! This is the most helpful thing I have ever done for myself! I recommend this program for anyone."

"Life-changing habits that will enable me to continue an active lifestyle into my 80s and 90s."

- Master of Memory: Senior citizens learn techniques to "stretch" their brains and focus on memory;
- Skagit County Fair "Think Your Drink:" Community members encouraged to drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages and more water; and
- Food Banks: Food bank recipients learn how to prepare items they receive through recipe demonstrations at two different food banks in Skagit County.

Extension educators typically are invited to present to community groups or at social service agency programs. By partnering with other agencies and in coalitions, WSU Extension is able to avoid duplication of services and enhance learning opportunities for participants.

IMPACTS

As a result of WSU Extension Ideas for Living, we found:

- Parents of preschool children say they gained confidence in feeding their children nutritious foods.
- Participants in the Master of Memory series shared that they enjoyed interacting with other participants, learning techniques to exercise their brains, and learning what can affect memory, including depression, stress, anxiety, and distraction. They have requested a follow-up "refresher" series.
- At the Skagit County Fair, youth and adult participants who viewed the "Think Your Drink" display, which featured common sugar-sweetened beverages and a bag of sugar to show how much sugar is in each beverage, expressed surprise at the sugar content of different beverages and acknowledged that they plan to drink more water and fewer sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Of the forty people who completed evaluation forms at the IFL display at the Skagit County Fair, 100% learned how much sugar is in soda and sweetened beverages, 85% plan to drink less soda and other sugary beverages, and 95% plan to drink more water and/or low-fat milk.
- Food bank directors report that certain foods that normally go untouched, such as golden beets, kale, black-eyed peas, Swiss chard, pumpkins, and turnips started "flying off of the shelves" after IFL recipe demonstrations.

