Food Preservation Training Model with Limited Staff and Resources

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Reasons for Project

- Renewed interest in growing & preserving
- Limited food safety staff
- Families with limited preservation skills
- Risk for foodborne illness
- 4-H leaders with limited skills

Most Important issue: lack of a unified protocol for answering food safety question
Project Goals

- To have competent Food Safety/Preservation Information Assistants in as many counties as possible
- Secure a two year $50,000 grant to develop a statewide effort to develop a Consumer Food Safety project in Washington State
Current Situation

- Anyone was answering food safety questions
- No accountability
- Lack of up-to-date training
- No back-up support for food safety
- Risk for a potential lawsuit, disability or death
Assessment Process

Survey with Extension County Directors

✓ 30 counties responded
  • confirmed people were answering questions & teaching classes with little training
  • some chose not to answer questions in their county
  • all stated food safety & preservation should be a state priority

Requirements:

✓ Counties invited to fill out an application
✓ Fee: $250
✓ Have designated county supervision
✓ 2-year training program

Accepted 52 people
Training Format

1. Enroll in Preserve @ Home – University of Idaho on-line course
   - 6 lessons
   - quiz with each lesson
   - real time on-line chat

2. Face-to-Face Lab
   - 3 day in-depth training with hands-on canning – WSU campus

3. Practice answering consumer questions, checking canner gauges & take home exam
WSU Food Safety/Preservation Information Assistants

You Can:
- Test canner gauges
- Provide food safety & preservation resources to consumers
- Staff display booths & do Q & A sessions

You Will NOT:
- Teach classes
- Train volunteers

Expectations:
- Keep log of contacts, questions, gauges checked and educational efforts
- Maintain contact with assigned mentor
Regional Training – Part 2

How to Teach Classes
- Enroll in “Preserve the Taste of Summer”
- Attend a regional 2-day hands-on session to learn how to teach classes
- Practice teaching “in the kitchen”

How to Manage Classes
- Work with county director to determine costs
- Potential participants need to enroll in “Preserve the Taste of Summer”
- Understand class structure, advertising, recruitment and follow-up
Continuing Education

**Mentors:**
- Maintained contact with their trainees
- Helped trainees understand how to respond to difficult consumer questions
- Encouraged them to expand their delivery of information

**Trainers:**
- Provided on-going education with conference calls, handouts, webinars and other resources to keep them up-to-date
Project Results

* 52 people were trained as WSU Food Safety/Preservation Information Assistants
* 35 people were trained to teach
* More pressure canner gauges checked
* Classes taught in many counties
* Provided an educational service to counties who previously had no one to answer questions
* Educational exhibits were used to reach new audiences
* 4-H leaders are now required to take “Preserve the Taste of Summer” before enrolling

* Hired a Consumer Food Safety Specialist!