

## **Goal 1: Teach families to access, use and manage resources wisely.**

**Preventing Credit Card Blues at 22** - Preventing Credit Card Blues at 22 was developed to address the concern of college student credit card use, over use and abuse. It was presented to over 900 high school seniors. These students had a significant change in being able to define credit, identify sound practices for managing credit card debt and practices to protect their personal identity. The information was made available to university students on a website, at Red Letter Day (Recruitment Days), taught to recruitment and housing staff to share with students and taught in introductory UNL classes.

**High School Financial Planning Program** - 88 Nebraska schools (3953 students) participated in the High School Financial Education Program during the 2002-2003 school year. Students have increased knowledge about credit cost and investments, improved skills to track spending, increased savings and gained more confidence in managing their money.

**Poverty Simulations** - 315 individuals experienced what it might be like to be part of a typical limited-resource family trying to survive from month to month through participating in the simulation, "Living in a State of Poverty." 87% indicated they were encouraged to take action as a result of the simulation. Participants commented they had "become more understanding and sympathetic," and would "encourage staff to do more planning with clients on how to help themselves and where resources are."

## **Goal 2: Teach families to strengthen and improve relationship skills in family and community.**

**Communications and Team Building** - All of life, whether at work or at home, is filled with relationships. Over 2000 youth and adults participated in Real Colors Matrixx programs throughout the past year to improve skills to build successful relationships. As a result, 97% indicate they have a better understanding of people and personalities and 80% have increased their understanding of how to communicate better with others. Participants stated: "Everyone is different and we need to respect that." "Real Colors training has made it easier for me to understand the decisions, motivations, stress levels, emotions and points of views of others."

**Parent Education** - Over 3500 participated in parenting classes and programs to develop strong families, based on Dr. John DeFrain's research of characteristics of strong families. Key ideas learned in these classes include: "Families can be changed (for the better)." "The difference between discipline and punishment." "What the family strengths were and how to have a stronger family." 40% more parents praised their child for positive behavior after taking parenting classes. Participants stated "these programs have taught us some positive techniques to strengthen our family."

Printed materials are a key method of communicating parent and family relationship information to the residents of Nebraska. Regular columns appeared in newspapers with combined circulations of over 274,000 per week. Over 2600 parent newsletters are printed and distributed each month.

**Building Nebraska Families** - Building Nebraska Families (BNF) is focused on educating the hard to employ, rural clients of Nebraska's HHS welfare to work program. By learning necessary life skills, families are more

successful in transitioning from welfare to work while maintaining their families. In the past year, 43 participants graduated from the program. Significant changes were reported in their outlook on life, ability to set goals, paying bills in full and on time, and keeping records of how money is spent. Monthly income had increased from a mean of \$408 to \$750. In addition, 311 hours were volunteered in the community - a significant achievement. In a 6 month follow-up, graduates continue to improve their family and life skills.

**Parents Forever** - Eight hundred parents have learned to focus on the needs of their children (over 1000) during the divorce process by attending a parent education program, "Parents Forever." As a result of these classes, 2% remarriage has occurred, 2% divorces have been dropped and 100% of adults have recognized the effect of divorce on their children. Developing a parallel parenting plan assists the family move forward rather than being caught in custody battles. This also saves in legal fees and court time, a potential savings of \$1000 per family. Overwhelmingly, parents appreciate the class, learn new skills and change behaviors because of it. Children attending Kids Talk About Divorce find their problems are similar to others and develop a new friendships. In addition, a community lesson was developed, a series of 6 NebFacts published and presentations made at conferences and on television to further distribute the concepts taught in this program.

### **Goal 3: Help communities identify family needs; design and implement plans to meet those needs.**

**Training Child Care Professionals** - Over 4300 child care professionals, educators, foster parents and parents attended child care conferences and workshops. As a result they report a 26% increase in confidence that their interaction is appropriate to the child's needs and ages and 22% increase in providing more stimulating environments for the children in their care. Increases are also reported in improved relationships with parents of the children in their care and increased use of positive reinforcement to modify behavior.

**Family Festivals** - Family strength research identifies spending time together as one of the qualities found in strong families. Thirteen Children's Festivals/Family Nights provided opportunities for 4904 parents and their children to relax and enjoy activities as a family. Families reported these benefits: they express more appreciation for family members, they exhibit more patience for other family members, and they have increased the time they spend doing activities together. Parents were inspired to try new activities as a family that are more creative and educational.

**Juvenile Diversion** - 375 youth and/or adults participated in seven juvenile diversion programs. Parents responded positively about going through Juvenile Diversion rather than court. One parent wrote, "I feel that this program is better than putting a child on probation and making them pay a fine because at least this way they are being taught something that they will use forever. It also teaches them about the choices they make, respect, trustworthiness, drugs and alcohol." Youth stated that they learned they needed to think before they acted. "I learned to respect parents better, be more honest, and respect parent's decisions."

**Coalitions** - Family Coalitions in nine communities have reached over 7,351 community members. Juvenile services plans were written in 5 counties, making them eligible for grant funds. One county was awarded over \$19,000 and was able to start a Community Service Coordinator position for juveniles that are referred through the court system, probation and juvenile diversion. Another county reported that 36 families have been assisted through a Community Wraparound Program which serves families in crisis by helping the families develop a plan for their safety and resources needed.