

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Extension educators turn understanding to action through Dementia Friends program

AT A GLANCE

Extension educators partner with the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) program to bring Dementia Friends to Idaho and help community members turn understanding to action.

The Situation

In Idaho 65,000 community members provide care to someone with Alzheimer's disease. Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia, which is not a disease, but a general term for decline in a person's functioning. Alzheimer's and dementia affect more than 27,000 people in Idaho. With so many community members affected by dementia, there is a need to create Dementia Friendly communities. A Dementia Friendly community is a community where members understand dementia and those who live with dementia are included and supported.

Our Response

To build Dementia Friendly communities, the Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (ADRD) program trained six Dementia Champions who subsequently provide information sessions on what it means to be a friend of dementia. These six educators are located across the state to carry out training to Idahoans in multiple locations. A Dementia Friend session can be taught online or in-person and lasts approximately 60-75 minutes. Sessions teach community members about what dementia is through activities and videos. These activities and videos build understanding of how someone living with dementia thinks and feels.



Youth Dementia Friends who participated in an information session day camp.

Sessions end with participants turning their understanding into action by choosing a small action they can do in their community.

Program Outcomes

These community members include 36 youth who attended youth Dementia Friends information sessions. As a result of this program 96% of participants reported that their awareness and understanding of dementia increased. Additionally, 93% of participants reported feeling more confident and equipped to recognize signs and offer support to the needs of a person living with dementia after attending an information session. One of the biggest outcomes of this program has been reducing the negative stigma associated with dementia. This can be seen by the comments from

participants. One participant said, “I want them [those living with dementia] to feel like they belong and not be ashamed.”

At the end of each session participants are asked to choose a small action that they can perform in their community as a Dementia Friend. (Table 1).

Many of the participants reported they are likely to adopt Dementia Friendly practices into their everyday lives, whether it be personal or professional. Comments related to Dementia Friendly practices include: “I will be more patient; I will review [the practices] often and incorporate them into my professional and personal life.” And “I was not well-acquainted with dementia before attending this [session]. My awareness was generally improved by this [session].” In addition to understanding those living with dementia, this program also provided better understanding of caregivers, and others affected by dementia. One participant said, “This helped me see the importance of being supportive to the patient, the caregivers and those needing information or guidance.” Overall, participants report building empathy and feeling empowered to help those living with dementia enjoy a high quality of life.

The Future

University of Idaho Extension educators plan to continue to offer Dementia Friends information sessions across the state. Currently there are plans to get additional Extension educators trained as Dementia Champions. Working alongside community members and leaders, Extension educators will encourage and incorporate Dementia Friendly practices into their communities.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Funding for this program was provided by Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias program.

Table 1. Chosen Dementia Friendly Actions

Action Chosen by Participants	# of Participants
Volunteering to participate in a clinical trial	11
Volunteering for an organization that helps people with dementia	15
Supporting dementia friendly effort in my community	60
Starting a dementia friendly effort in my community	14
Getting in touch and staying in touch with someone I know living with dementia	71
Encouraging friends to become dementia friends	44
Carrying out a personal action; e.g. being more patient out in the community	69
Compaigning for change; e.g. by participating in local advocacy events	13
Asking my doctor for a cognitive assessment during my annual exam	38
Adopting one or more dementia friendly practices in my personal or professional life	69
Other action not listed	11

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Tasha Howard**, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Canyon County • 208-459-6003 • thoward@uidaho.edu
- Bridget Morrisroe**, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Ada County • 208-287-5900 • bridgeta@uidaho.edu
- Kathleen Tiftt**, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Nez Perce County • 208-799-3096 • ktiftt@uidaho.edu
- Kirstin Jensen**, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Idaho County • 208-983-2667 • kjensen@uidaho.edu
- Laura Sant**, FCS Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Franklin County • 208-852-1097 • lsant@uidaho.edu
- Leslee Blanch**, FCS Assoc. Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Bonneville County • 208-529-1390 • lblanch@uidaho.edu