



Hmong & Latino families celebrated diversity, their culture and traditions at the Multicultural Holiday Celebration.

Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – December 2016/January 2017

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Text Messages Support Co-Parenting

When a family goes through divorce or separation, it can be difficult to adjust to the changes. Education and resources offer strategies to educate parents and children about the impact of the family transition and adjustment to their new life as co-parents. Further, co-parenting education and resources are needed by families that have children, yet were not married to one another as well. Fond du Lac County UW Extension Family Living Educator Michelle Tidemann provides educational support for parents learning their new role as a co-parent and to meet this need seeks out new methods of educational outreach.

eParenting® Co-Parenting text messaging was piloted 2015 through 2016 in the state. The text message series was designed to teach positive co-parenting methods via text. Digital media and texting are a viable educational tool reaching many American adults under the age of 50.

During the initial eight month pilot in 2015, the *eParenting*® Co-Parenting text messages were delivered to nearly 200 parents from six Wisconsin counties. Fond du Lac County UW Extension Family Living Educator and Fond du Lac County Family Courts Mediator were invited to have Fond du Lac County be one of the six counties to participate in the first pilot. Fond du Lac County parents attending Living Apart Parenting Together co-parent class for divorce/separating parents and parents attending Keeping It About the Kids paternity co-parent class were invited to participate in the text support messages at the completion of their co-parent class session. In 2015, Fond du Lac County invited 134 parents to participate with 80 parents participating in the first pilot. Fond du Lac County parents represented 40% of the six county pilot study of 200 parents. Two-thirds (65%) of co-parents in the six counties who were offered the text messages signed up to receive the texts. Participation in the pilot was extended into 2016 -- 181 parents were invited to participate in the text messaging pilot with 95 parents choosing to participate.

Fond du Lac County co-parents participating in the text messaging series, supporting their co-parent roles are represented in the outcomes from the six county pilot. From the 2015 pilot evaluation, the majority of parents (75%) said the co-parenting texts were useful. About two-thirds (67%) of parents said the text messages helped them remember and practice what they learned in their face-to-face co-parenting class. Respondents to both the weekly texted evaluation questions and the final questionnaire also agreed because of these text messages they:

- Made a greater effort to cooperate with their co-parent
- Were less likely to make negative remarks about their co-parent
- Incorporated digital media more positively into their co-parenting

The text messaging project aimed at co-parents has the potential to teach and reinforce co-parenting skills in an efficient and effective way.

Multicultural Holiday Celebration

The North Fond du Lac Elementary School Friendship Learning Center hosted a Multicultural Holiday Celebration for Latino and Hmong families. Araceli Oswald (4-H Youth Development Assistant) coordinated this event for the third year. The goal of this event was to bring the Latino and Hmong community together to interact, learn from each other, to celebrate diversity, their culture and traditions.

Araceli Oswald met with ELL teachers and Hmong community leaders to envision the best way to engage students and their parents. Prior to the event, the ELL students had the opportunity to learn about holiday traditions in the Latinos and Hmong cultures. They learned how to make piñatas and Hmong embroidery by making ornaments. Currently 75 students are enrolled in their ELL program.

Over 150 people participated in this event. Snacks and drinks were provided by the school. Youth, parents, grandparents, school staff and members of the community participated in the celebration. The Hmong community presented a dance and the New Year's traditional game "Ball Toss." The Latino community shared the tradition of the "Posadas" with caroling and breaking the piñata. Parents contributed to this event donating food and candy bags and would like to continue participating and supporting events like this to bring the community together.

- During the Hmong New Year celebration, the Hmong ball tossing game is a common activity for adolescents. Boys and girls from two different families line up in pairs that are directly facing one another. The pairs toss a cloth ball back and forth, singing songs until one member drops the ball.
- The "Piñata" was introduced to Latin America as a fun activity to teach natives about the Catholic religion, representing the capital sins with each spike in the piñata. Breaking away bad habits symbolizes the wish to become a better person and receive a reward, in this case represented with candy.

Araceli Oswald will continue working with the Latino students at the school's homework program and continue to build relationships with the Latino and Hmong families.

Poverty Education

Amanda Miller and Michelle Tidemann have partnered with two community agencies, Lakeland Care District and Agnesian HealthCare, to offer a variety of poverty education. UW-Extension's PACE (Poverty Awareness for Community Engagement) is a toolkit that offers a wide range of workshops, including data presentations, activities, discussion groups, and simulations. Workshops range in complexity and length.

On February 7, Miller and Tidemann will host an introduction to Agnesian Social Workers, with the goal of starting a conversation on the complex issue of poverty. Current local poverty data, an explanation of how poverty is defined and measured, and interactive activities to explore personal paradigms, including "Find Someone Who..." and "What's Class Got to Do with It?" will all be presented.

An example of a more complex presentation of poverty is the "poverty simulation." The goal is to raise awareness of the barriers associated with poverty by having participants "walk in the shoes of." A simulation requires about 3 hours and a minimum of 75 participants. As participants enter the simulation, they are randomly assigned a "family" and assigned tasks to meet their basic needs for a month. Approximately 15 staffers are assigned the role of community agencies that provide services or goods to the families. At the end of the simulation, a debriefing session allows participants to reflect on the thoughts and emotions during the activity.

Amanda Miller and Michelle Tidemann plan to offer two upcoming poverty simulations. Lakeland Care District, an agency that serves eligible elders and adults with disabilities, has requested a simulation in February. In addition, planning conversations will take place with Agnesian to follow-up the February 7 presentation with a poverty simulation for the social workers team.

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