



Financial Resource Management

Situation:

Twenty-two percent of working families in New Hampshire are economically insecure because their earnings and income fall below the basic family budget standard. According to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, this includes public work support and other public benefits. At the same time, families' personal savings rate as a percentage of disposable income has also declined since the late 1980s, according to the US Department of Commerce. In the last three years, the rate has hovered close to zero.

With the current financial crisis spreading across the country, many Belknap County families face increasing financial pressure. There is a need for families to have access to reliable information as they make financial decisions, as well as education on how to develop good family finance habits.

UNH Cooperative Extension's Response:

UNH Cooperative Extension's Family Resource Management programs focus on increasing knowledge and skills in a variety of areas, including learning how to identify and develop goals, a spending/savings plan, understanding credit and reducing overall debt, stretching resources, and becoming a more educated consumer.

- Eight teachers from six Belknap County high schools attended the 2008 MoneySmarts conference sponsored by the NH Jumpstart Coalition (UNHCE is a partner). A total of 43 teachers (with 350 students) in Belknap County have been trained and are now teaching the High School Financial Planning Program. The curriculum and instructional materials are provided free to teachers by UNH Cooperative Extension.
- One hundred and thirty Belknap County residents participated in workshops focused on developing money management skills. In an effort to reach a diverse audience, workshops were made available in a variety of settings, including several worksite programs, school programs, and workshops for inmates at the Belknap County House of Corrections.
- UNH Cooperative Extension coordinates the NH Statewide Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) Alliance where coalitions and statewide partners work to increase the number of taxpayers receiving EITC through free tax preparation. Educators from UNH Cooperative Extension and an EITC Employer Mobile Site went to two Belknap County sites (LRG Healthcare and Golden View Healthcare Center), and provided taxpayer financial management education to 18 individuals/households.
- UNH Cooperative Extension conducted training for community partners associated with the Individual Development Accounts, where community-based coalitions partner with the NH Community Loan Fund, providing financial management education, matching savings for people of low and moderate income that helps them either buy a house, start a business or get an education.

How We Made a Difference:

- More than 300 students in Belknap County gained knowledge and skills in credit, debt, spending plans, insurance, and money management decision making.
- One hundred-thirty (130) Participants in money management workshops demonstrated an increased understanding of developing a reasonable budget, the importance of savings, and how to manage credit and reduce debt.
- The Laconia Asset Building Coalition, a grass-roots coalition of community agencies and organizations, formed and was mentored by the NH EITC Alliance. In its first year of operating a free tax preparation site, 290 taxpayers received help preparing their taxes for free, a savings of at least \$43,500.
- In addition, the EITC eligible taxpayers from Belknap County gained \$38,588 in Earned Income Tax Credit, \$9,273 for Child Tax Credit and \$142,888 in total refunds.

- The EITC Employer Mobile Site went to two companies and provided taxpayer financial management education to 18 Belknap County individuals/households, saving at least \$2,700 to each household. These individuals/households received refunds totaling \$16,901.
- Five Belknap County residents received the brochure *Build Wealth Not Debt* and signed up to be a New Hampshire saver. They committed to saving an average of \$194 a month for emergency reserves, retirement, education, debt reduction, homeownership and vehicle purchases.

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