Washington State University Franklin County Extension

HEALTH & WELLNESS | NATURAL RESOURCES | YOUTH & FAMILIES

FRANKLIN COUNTY QUICK FACTS

- *Named for Benjamin Franklin*
- *County seat: Pasco*
- *Land area, in square miles: 1,242 (state rank: 27)*
- *Median household income (2004): $42,092*
- *Population (2007): 67,400 (state rank: 19)*

CONTACT

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Washington State University Franklin County Extension is part of the world-class outreach and engagement enterprise of the university. We partner with businesses, the community, and volunteers to drive innovation, invention, and technology transfer. We specifically focus on expanding the problem-solving capacity of communities within the county, enhancing and sustaining the local economy, enhancing natural resources and the environment, enhancing economic opportunities for agriculture, improving health and wellness—especially in the realm of nutrition—and eliminating barriers to the success of youth and families. WSU Extension touches almost every aspect of people's lives—whether they live in urban, suburban, or rural areas.

WSU Extension Franklin County is funded the same way it operates: with strong, vital partnerships that leverage each other. Franklin County faculty work cooperatively with Benton County educators to serve the entire geographic region. Franklin County Extension educators and staff have successfully competed for dollars from public agencies and private funding organizations to meet the diverse needs of the communities we serve. In 2008, WSU Franklin County Extension garnered $1,205,000 in external grant funding. This equates to over $6.00 in return for every dollar that Franklin County spends to support programs, for a 600 percent return on investment.

Impacts

Agriculture

The Franklin County area produces high quality and high yielding crops of many different types. Crop sales in Franklin County totaled $467 million from 891 farms, according to the 2007 Census of Agriculture.

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
FRANKLIN COUNTY EXTENSION

AGRICULTURAL SUPPORT

WSU Extension educator Tim Waters (left) looking at a carrot field with growers.

55–60 onion varieties are tested annually to find out which ones perform best (below). Results are presented at an annual field day event (right).

For every dollar's worth of raw agricultural product harvested, an additional $4–6 are generated as those products move through the processing and supply chain on their way to market.

Vegetable crops produced commercially in Franklin County include: asparagus, carrots, sweet corn, squash, garlic, peas, beans, onions, pumpkins, eggplant, watermelon, and potatoes. This diversity of crops can present unique challenges: some of these crops are produced on a relatively small scale and therefore do not have a large amount of resources expended on them for research on pest management practices or agronomic production issues.

WSU Franklin County Extension has resources and contacts within Washington State University, the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington State Department of Agriculture, Oregon State University, and several private companies, and partners with them to help producers solve problems in a timely fashion.

The funding provided to the Extension office in Franklin County in support of the commercial vegetable position is nearly tripled in the form of private in-kind contributions, grants, and volunteer service for research and Extension activities in areas that directly improve the situations of local producers.

WSU Franklin County Extension advances agriculture in the Columbia Basin with insecticide efficacy trials, variety testing, field days, and other activities. The onion cultivar trial is one example. Each year we test 55–60 onion varieties to find out which perform best. We provide the results at our annual Field Day which attracts participants from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, California, Colorado, and even Japan and the Netherlands. The trial is regarded as very accurate and the information is used by seed retailers and producers in variety selection. Almost all major onion varieties grown in the Columbia Basin were tested here. In the last decade, onion yields have risen from 40.6 tons/acre to 42.6 tons/acre in part because growers have adopted newer, higher yielding varieties tested in our trials. At current prices (12 cents/lb), this 5% increase in yield adds about $9 million to the value of the state's onion crop annually.

Youth and Families

4-H

More than 1,200 youth in Franklin and Benton counties are enrolled in 4-H programs supervised by Franklin County Extension's 4-H Development Educator. 4-H provides high-quality educational experiences that have a lasting positive impact on the young people who participate, increasing the life skills that prepare them for work and life. For example, as a result of their participation in the 4-H residential camp program, for which the counselors (students in grades 7–12) received 32 hours of pre-camp training, 100% of the counselors reported improvements in their own decision-making and communications skills. Smaller gains were made in accepting differences, leadership, and self-responsibility. Evaluations of both special interest and traditional clubs show improvement in such life skills as goal setting, organizing, recordkeeping, and making positive health choices.

A total of 390 adult volunteers each contributed an average of 200 hours of service to the 4-H program. At a rate of $18.04 (Independent Sector, Washington State 2006) their donation of time is worth $1,407,120 in contributed volunteer capital which would otherwise require 24 FTE paid staff to do the same youth development work.

Food $ense

New to Franklin County in 2008, Food $ense works through partnering community agencies to teach youth and adults with limited incomes to eat healthfully and to maximize the value of their food dollars. Food Sense complements food assistance programs by working directly with people to provide experiential education that builds skills needed to provide nutritious, low-cost, and safe food for themselves and their families. In its first year, Franklin County Food $ense taught 650 2nd through 6th graders in Connell, Basin City, and Rowena Chess elementary schools the importance of healthy eating. Teachers report that students now talk about the food groups and their own food choices, food effects on health and energy, and labels on food products at home—leading to further food discussions with their parents.

Pathways

Improving Childcare

Franklin County Extension is pioneering a Spanish literacy program in Washington state that teaches preliterate Latino childcare providers how to read and write in their native Spanish language as well as helping them build their vocabulary and math skills. The project also teaches more advanced learners English and early childhood development. This enables care providers to offer a childcare service that is more education-based.

The Pathways program came about because licensors for the Department of Early Learning found that the required licensing forms filed by many Latino

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

"It sounds kind of cheesy, but you learn a lot of life skills. One of the major things I've learned is speaking in public because every year you have to give presentations. And we do a lot of community service projects and learn the importance for volunteering."

—Hannah Mowry, 12
(Tri-City Herald 11.16.08)

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

"As a young girl I never had the privilege of going to school because I always had to work. It is sad to grow up and not have an education, but it is never too late to learn."

—Pathways Project Student

childcare providers were often filled out inadequately. The forms were returned to their authors as many as seven times for corrections. Licensors believe that providers might be photocopying materials from each other or having children write their business plan, parent handbook, and medical policies. Upon further investigation, it was discovered that many of these providers were preliterate in Spanish, their native language. Research shows that when child care providers lack basic literacy skills, the children for whom they are responsible are at risk both physically and developmentally.

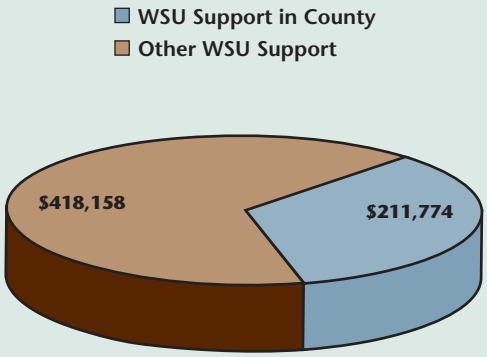
The program started in March 2007 with 28 Latino childcare providers. It expanded into a three-year research project called Educational Pathways for Latino Childcare Providers ("Pathways") in 2008, thanks to a $1 million grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Now about 60 students are enrolled, with about a third taking advanced early learning classes.

The program is already showing positive impacts, starting with care providers setting long-term goals to finish their basic education, earn a Child Development Associate credential at Columbia Basin College, and learn English. Evaluations show increases in Spanish and English literacy, improved business skills, better childcare licensing competencies, and enriched quality of service to children.

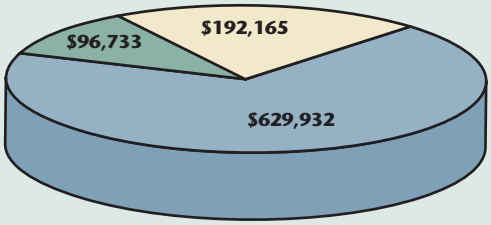
Educators are developing this education model for replication while adding new knowledge that connects early-learning environments to children's school success.

Overview of Funding for WSU Franklin County Extension Programs

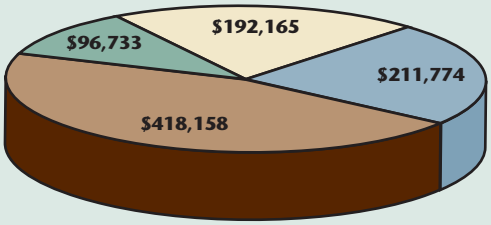
WSU Support for County Extension Programs



Direct Funding Sources for County Extension Programs



Total Funding Supporting County Extension Programs



WSU Extension programs and employment are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local WSU Extension office.