Extension Helps Early Childhood Educators Build Good Consumers

Creating healthy environments is one of the signature issues being addressed by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in Dickinson County.

The recent child care provider training program entitled “I Want, I Want: Building Good Consumers” equipped early child care professionals with tools to help youth and families become more savvy consumers.

Marketing to children has become big business. In fact, today’s marketers are spending more than 50 million dollars per day on advertising to reach children with messages to buy the latest foods, toys and clothes.

Child care professionals in the two-hour continuing education program shared that they plan to make changes as a result of the training by:

- Comparing prices and labels for foods to get more for my money.
- Actively seeking out different toy recommendations for parents.
- Walking through with my own children what advertisers are doing.
- Being more aware of how I speak to children about what they are wearing. For example, when they get new shoes compliment them on how they are growing rather than buying into tactics of commenting on the style or brand choice of shoes.
- Looking more closely at the marketing behind the books, toys, and foods I purchase for our center.
- Changing how we do “show & tell” so we don’t contribute to the consumerism of bigger, better, more…

Child care providers participated in brand comparisons and taste testing of cereals. They read labels and calculated cost per serving to determine the best buy. They also evaluated toys based on play value. Can the child use the toy in more than one way? Will the toy help the child develop new skills? Is it sturdy? Is it age appropriate? Does it promote non-violent play?

These early childhood educators are excited about their new knowledge and eager to implement action plans to improve the books, toys, and food choices for children in their care.

“Connecting the needs of Iowans with ISU research and resources leads to increased access to healthy and nurturing environments for youth and families. Our communities benefit when your children are well cared for,” Karen Byers, Dickinson County Extension Director