

Combined program expands understanding of family needs

Parenting educators who work with parents in one-to-one and group settings, and front-line workers who help families identify and reach their goals for self-reliance and interdependence came to Marshalltown during the winter and spring of 2008 to strengthen the skills they need to support families. Marshall County Extension coordinated local logistics of the pilot program that combined family development certification training and Partnering with Parents continuing education training.

“We were excited to be selected as the host county for the pilot,” said Angie Nelson, Marshall County Extension Education Director. “We were selected to host the program because we are centrally located and have a high number of family development workers.”



The 33 students enrolled in the pilot program came from all parts of Iowa for the 13 to 14 days of training. Most of the students signed up for the full course and received certificates of completion for both trainings. Had they selected to take the two trainings separately, they would have had 18 days of training invested. Marian Lagerstrom, ADLM Parents As Teachers program manager for the Southern Iowa Economic Development Association (SIEDA), and her PAT staff took the training because she wanted everyone to have a strong core knowledge base.

“The PAT staff work one-on-one with parents on child development issues; we focus on the needs and development of pre-natal to age five children,” said Lagerstrom. “The Extension training focused on the adult component. It gave us a perspective of what some of the issues are that parents face and helped us understand adults as learners.”

Lagerstrom said the training complimented the skills her staff already had and will help them deliver services more thoroughly. Now they can recognize issues that parents are struggling with and know of resources available to help them. Iowa State University Extension to Families campus and field specialists are creating a multi-year plan to offer the training at different locations two times a year.

“The instructors for every session were very knowledgeable and talked from the heart,” said Lagerstrom. “A family development certification isn’t required for the PAT position at this time, but the state is moving in that direction. This program is a great opportunity to get that certification close to home.” - *Marian Lagerstrom, PAT program manager for SIEDA*

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