

Diversity Paragraphs

2/9/08

Diversity Activities: The face of the United States and its workplace is changing. At Forum this year, each county received two booklets of activities to promote diversity, *Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults*, and *More Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults*.

The activities in these publications are appropriate for use with Extension staff, volunteers and advisory committees, and with community partners. Most of the activities are appropriate for older youth (middle school and above) and adults, and some of the activities may be adapted for younger children. For more information on the CSU Extension Diversity Catalyst Team, contact Jan Carroll, jan.carroll@colostate.edu.

2/10/09 Ken Grimes

Black History Month: The month of February is Black History Month, an opportunity to become more aware of the history of a population that is rich with diverse culture. In 1926, Carter Godwin Woodson, the son of a slave and founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, initiated Black History Week. In a time when formal ways of keeping track of black history and traditions were not valued, Woodson published a journal of Negro history to highlight the contributions by black men and women. African Americans today sometimes joke about having the shortest month for the celebration of Black History, but it was selected in deference to Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. We all grow from the study of our collective history.

3/24/09 Ann Zander

Honoring Diversity: According to Webster's dictionary, the word "honor" means to give, receive or enjoy high regard or great respect. As we celebrate spring in different ways, through cultural or religious events, we honor diversity and demonstrate respect and inclusion. There are ways to use your Extension program calendar to honor diversity. This site will help you with that: <http://www3.kumc.edu/diversity/> . Watch people light up when you ask about an event or holiday of significance to them. And don't forget to share stories from your own traditions.

5/19/09 Jan Sennhenn

Diversity in Extension: Working with unfamiliar groups can be a challenge. The mission of Extension includes reaching out to all Coloradans, not just the audiences we feel comfortable with regardless of such things as location, language, lifestyle, belief systems, income and age. Sara Ward, Extension educator in Denver wrote, "I've been working with first generation immigrant Latino audiences since I began with Extension two years ago. I'm blonde, green eyed and I definitely wasn't raised in an environment that at all resembles Latino culture. I also teach to audiences that are generations older than me and I never so much as had grandparents growing up. Just because an

audience is new to me or just because I don't see the commonalities on the surface, doesn't mean I don't have a very valuable service to offer. It takes drive and determination to step into unknown territory but that is precisely what helps us grow, as individuals and as an organization.” For more tips on diversity at Extension, visit <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/diversity/index.html>.

6/5/09 Sarah Ward

Diversity Dilemma: we often hear that we need to “value” diversity. What does that mean? As Extension personnel we need to understand and appreciate there is a difference between valuing diversity and having the appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviors to know how to work effectively with diverse audiences. One key is to know how to relate to individual and group unique qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside of the groups to which we belong. Diversity Central’s website: http://www.diversitycentral.com/learning/diversity_dilemma.html posts a monthly diversity dilemma that puts your attitudes and beliefs toward diversity to the test.

6/16/09

Diversity Catalyst Team CSU Extension staff formed the Diversity Advisory Committee around 1996. This team has evolved through the years; community leaders were added and the name changed to the Diversity Task Force. The group defined itself as the Diversity Catalyst Team between 2001 and 2002. The group has been compared to a tug boat, inspiring institutional development, change and progress in big and small ways. In order to accomplish its goals, forums have been held where individuals could put aside titles, broach tough issues, seek solutions and help guide policy. In the past year the team has been connecting through regular conference calls and a couple of face-to-face meetings. For more information about how to get involved with the Diversity Catalyst Team, call or e-mail Ken Grimes (720-913-5267; kenneth.grimes@denvergov.org) or Jan Carroll (970-491-6102; jan.carroll@colostate.edu)

7/28/09 Mary Ellen Fleming

Why Diversity? Here is the business world’s perspective (from Diversity in the Workplace: <http://www.allbusiness.com/> . A diverse organization is one that invites, embraces and manages difference in the changing workforce to gain the best from its people and to provide the best service to its customers. It encourages the breaking down of barriers of the past to look at things in a new way, to find effective business and customer solutions. In such organizations diversity is regarded as a competitive differentiator, in both employment and customer markets. Characteristics of such organizations include:

- * Recognition of diversity as a business issue. Every level of the organization holds responsibility not just HR or marketing.

- * The existence of widely accepted and practiced set of values that ensure the respect and dignity of all.

* An environment where the insights of diverse groups are sought and welcomed; where people are not alienated or sidelined because they don't 'fit' into a set expectation.

* Innovation and creativity are rewarded and recognized.

* A climate where people feel that their background and lifestyle does not affect perceptions of them as a professional, or affect their opportunities for development.

* The diverse workforce is visible at every level of the organization and in every business area.

* CSU Extension diversity resources can be found online at <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/diversity/>

9/16/09 Kim Jones

Working with Diverse Populations: Members of the CSU Extension Diversity Catalyst Team have been contributing to a regular dialogue on working with various groups in their Extension programs. Five important points are stressed by Arapahoe County Extension agent, 4-H and Youth Development and School Enrichment Coordinator, Kimberley Jones:

* Build on the cultural values of families.

* Stress personal contact with families.

* Foster communication with families.

* Create a warm environment.

* Facilitate accommodations for family involvement.

To read more about how Jones incorporated these principles into her educational programs, as well as learn about cultural terms visit <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/diversity/work-diverse-pop.pdf>

11/3/09 Judy Barth

Diversity Catalyst Team: The Extension Diversity Catalyst Team plan of work (2009 – 2012) has, as its first goal, to ensure that diverse communities are served by Extension programming. As we work to prioritize programs, let's consider how we advertise and market our educational offerings to be as inclusive as possible.

“As Secretary of Agriculture, I fully support the U.S, Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies and programs,” says Vilsack. “Improving civil rights throughout USDA is one of my top priorities, and by pursuing this goal together in a transparent and ethical manner we can lead the way in making USDA a model organization.” Complete comments by Vilsack can be found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/about_cr_policy.html.

1/12/10 Jan Carroll

Diversity Grants: Diversity grants were awarded -- <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/staffres/funding/diversity/awarded.html> -- in

spring 2008, enabling Extension faculty and staff to expand programming to new and diverse audiences. The projects allowed agents, specialists, and community agencies to form partnerships, to reach new audiences, and to increase our cultural competency. Give the PI (listed below in parenthesis) a call to find out more about the short-term outcomes of these projects.

- * Agricultural Excellence Award, Colorado Association for Environmental Education, cross-generational learning and sharing—Cripple Creek Junior Master Gardener Program (JMG) (Mark Platten)

- * 55 Extension and non-Extension Coloradoans in all three Extension regions participate in focus groups—assisting with Development of Culturally Relevant and Appropriate Programming (Ken Grimes)

- * Parents see a vision of their children as scientists—Promoting Science/Technology Careers in Native American and Spanish Speaking Youth (Jan Miller-Heyl and Dana Cox)

- * Raised garden beds allow seniors and disabled with limited mobility to garden in intergenerational project—4-H Youth & Retired Elders in the Community to Share, Learn, Teach, Encourage and Build Friendships Through Gardening (Joann Jones, Luann Boyer, David Whiting) and Holyoke Community Diversity Gardening, ages 5-14, Elderly & Disabled (Linda Langelo and David Whiting)

- * Farmers' Market brochure in English and Spanish, available at Colorado farmers' markets, WIC offices, and County Extension Offices—Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Food Stamp Transactions at Farmers' Markets ((Marissa Bunning and Ann Zander)

2/16/10 Jan Sennhenn

Diversity as a Word and Action: In a white paper published by PRISM International it states frequently the word “diversity” is used indiscriminately and in ways that may cause distress and confusion. For example, we often hear “we want to diversify our workforce.” As a result, employees are quick to assume that diversity is warmed over affirmative action. As an organization, Extension can change this perception when our language is accurate and is aligned with organizational behavior. When we say “diversity is about all of us” we then must back up the words with actions that not only bring everyone to the table, but also foster a sense of genuine inclusion.

Diversity Resources & Rationale: At Annual Forum, each county received two booklets of activities to promote diversity. Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults, and More Diversity Activities for Youth and Adults. They are white, 8 ½ “x 11” publications with the Penn State logo and “College of Agricultural Sciences Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension “on the front cover.

When and where should these activities be used? The activities in these publications are appropriate for your use with Extension staff, volunteers, and advisory committees, and with community partners. Most of the activities are

appropriate for older youth (middle school and above) and adults, and some of the activities may be adapted for younger children. You can base your decisions on your facilitator's knowledge of the group's cognitive level and needs.

The face of the United States and its workplace is changing. A growing number of neighborhoods and communities contain a complex mix of races, cultures, languages, and religious affiliations. At the same time, the widening gap between the rich and the poor is creating greater social class diversity. In addition, the U.S. population includes more than 43 million people with physical and mental challenges.

For these reasons, today's youth and adults are more likely to face the challenges of interacting and working with people different from themselves. The ability to relate well to all types of people in the workplace is a leadership skill that is becoming increasingly important. Understanding, accepting, and valuing diverse backgrounds can help young people and adults thrive in this ever-changing society.

How can the activities provided to you by the Diversity Catalyst Team boost understanding of diversity? First, learning about diversity can be fun. The activities in these publications can help participants:

- Recognize how we place self-imposed limits on the way we think.
- Discover that, in many ways, people from different cultures and backgrounds hold similar values and beliefs.
- Become more aware of our own cultural viewpoints and the stereotypes we may have inadvertently picked up.
- Accept and respect the differences and similarities in people.

Some of the activities can be used as discussion starters or icebreakers. Others may be the basis for an entire lesson. In either case, the facilitator should allow enough time for discussion at the end of each activity. Debriefing is important for dealing with unresolved feelings or misunderstandings. It is equally important to conduct activities in an atmosphere of warmth, trust, and acceptance.

4/2010 Ann Zander

Taking Diversity for Granted: Have you noticed the trend that people take "diversity" for granted or do not really understand it? For many people diversity lies in the color of the skin, speech, and culture. There's more in embracing diversity than accepting one's skin color, culture or speech. It's also about being open to different ideas and ways of thinking. I believe diversity lies in thought, in the way people come up with their ideas; in the way they express themselves, in accepting the fact that no two people are alike. Sadly, people fear what they can't understand and most people fear diversity. I see this everywhere around me, people labeling one another, labeling countries and cultures, labeling ways of thought, rejecting unconventional thinking, fearing

the unknown instead of embracing it. I think that “The only thing we need to fear is fear itself.” (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

May/2010 Ann Zander

Words: Being aware of the power of our choice of words is not about being politically correct. It is about treating people with respect and dignity and increasing awareness. In an article entitled, “Words are potent weapons for all causes, good or bad”, Kathy Lechman, Diversity Development, Ohio State University Extension, shares examples of some common statements that many of us have heard throughout our lives. These statements convey beliefs and attitudes that ultimately take away from the dignity and respect that should be afforded all individuals.

- I went to the car dealership and really “Jewed them down.”
- Why do those people keep causing problems and asking for special treatment?
- Fat people are lazy and lack discipline.
- You are such an Indian giver.
- Get your cotton-picking hands off of that!
- Old people should have their driver’s licenses taken away because they cannot drive.

In a Cornell Cooperative Extension fact sheet, *The Evolving Language of Diversity* - <http://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/diversitylanguage.pdf> - Kathy Castania provides us with some wonderful insights as to the power that words have to shape our thoughts, convey beliefs and perpetuate attitudes about groups. Kathy also identifies some common pitfalls and misused terms across multiple dimensions of diversity including gender, abilities, class, sexual orientation, etc. Alternative strategies that can be quickly incorporated into our day-to-day interactions with colleagues and program audiences are presented throughout the article, along with resources for additional exploration making this fact sheet an indispensable tool for advancing the work of Extension in increasingly diverse environments.