

Sewing workshop enhances adult leader knowledge to increase 4-H youth projects

AT A GLANCE

For the third year in a row, University of Idaho Extension educators and staff from Jefferson, Bonneville and Franklin counties taught sewing skills through six projects to community members.

The Situation

While STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) education is thriving in eastern Idaho, many don't realize how sewing skills fit under that umbrella. Numerous 4-H sewing clubs are seeking educated leaders that effectively teach youth sewing projects with skills that can provide positive experiences for youth as well as carry them into careers beyond high school. Sewing club leaders are always on the lookout for projects that meet the demands of schedules, time constraints and entry-level to intermediate skill levels. Our aim is to provide a network of resources for all youth sewing group leaders. Hosting a day-long workshop enabled community members to gather in one location to obtain written instructions, demonstration of specific techniques and an opportunity to ask questions regarding the skills being taught.

Our Response

To assist our community and provide an educational opportunity for adult leaders to acquire new project ideas and skills to teach the youth in our area, eastern district family and consumer sciences (FCS) and 4-H faculty and staff, alongside two guest presenters, presented at this year's workshop. Participants gathered



Educator Deanna Poulsen instructing on the process of sewing a rope basket. Photo by Laura Sant.

at the UI Extension office in Jefferson County with space to set up the needed supplies for sewing the projects. Presenters included UI Extension educators Laura Sant from Franklin County, who demonstrated a fabric wallet; Paige Wray from Bonneville County, who demonstrated sweatshirt redesign; and Deanna Poulsen from Jefferson County, who demonstrated a rope basket. Franklin County's 4-H Program Coordinator Cherie Carter presented the monster zipper pouch. Guest presenters included recently retired Bingham County FCS Extension educator Julie Buck who presented self-binding hot pads and local children's sewing class instructor for Jones Sew and Vac, Nancy Warner, who instructed on a quilted glasses case. All six presenters have extensive experience

teaching youth and adults with various skill levels how to sew.

A survey was used to collect information on changes in knowledge, design and construction choices, as well as understanding the mechanics of sewing machines. All nine adult participants responded to the survey, and 100% of participants indicated that they learned or improved at least one of the following skills while at the workshop: attaching a snap button, top stitching, clipping corners, creating layered pockets and attaching ribbon tabs.

Program Outcomes

Participants attended from Bonneville, Jefferson and Madison counties. They were each provided with a printed version of each project that can easily be used for youth as a step-by-step instructional guide. Each participant also received the necessary tools and materials to complete the project, with additional information on how to prepare the materials to enable the participants to then teach youth.

Notable outcomes included the following:

- Five UI Extension educators and staff taught a variety of basic and intermediate sewing projects. Results of the survey are in Table 1.
- All instructors felt that their instructional process improved in verbal and written delivery.
- Participants were eager to visit about related experiences and assisted each other in learning new skills, manipulating materials and learning about their machines.
- Our workshop is reaching our intended audience. While there were 18 participants registered, nine adults and two youth under age 18 attended.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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43-25-dpoulsen-sewing-projects • 10/25

One participant was from a local university, and the rest were seeking to teach their grandchildren or youth in 4-H clubs.

Table 1. Sewing and project skills learned

Skill taught	% who reported increased knowledge
Learned how to create a binding from bulk materials	89
Confident to instruct, supply and assist youth with creating a monster	88
Learned to reduce bulk of cotton rope to ease into the end of a machine stitched rope basket	86
Learned how to put a zipper in a pouch	67
Learned two new sewing machine functions, including setting up for a decorative stitch	63

The Future

University of Idaho Extension educators and staff in the eastern district plan to continue this program in the future.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

This project was funded by the 2025 University of Idaho Extension Innovative Project Award funds.

Jones Sew and Vac and the guest presenter donated the materials and her time to teach the quilted glasses case project.