

## Workshops introduce the joy of reading

“My 6-year-old daughter, Amber, had the confidence to read a book in front of the class,” remarks Nakiesha Timion, who enrolled her two children in the UNCE Family Storyteller literacy program. “What a social skills builder this has turned out to be. I can’t believe the reading tips I’ve learned. Parents don’t know everything!”

Timion’s younger daughter, Alesa, age 4, cannot read yet, but with the encouragement of instructor Murial Sanders, she “reads” a book to her mom and sister by looking at the pictures.

Studies show a child age one to six who shares a book with an adult for 15 minutes a day will be better prepared for reading instruction before ever entering school. Family Storyteller — taught in both English and Spanish — is offered in homes and in group settings. The six-week parent-child interactive reading program uses children’s literature, hands-on crafts and videotapes.

The workshops introduce families to the joy of literature and language, show parents techniques on how to read to their children, give time to practice these skills, and provide books and other language activities for use at home.

“Parents are encouraged to preview the book with their child, ask questions and read with expression,” said Sanders. “Eighty-nine percent of participants said they increased their reading time with their child from ‘never’ to ‘every day.’”



Photo by Las Vegas Review-Journal

*The Family Storyteller literacy program encourages parent-child book reading by introducing families to the joy of literature and language.*

## New community members find friendship and support

With more than 4,000 new people moving into Las Vegas each month, Friendship with Families is designed to help new community members become acclimated to their surroundings, says Program Coordinator Steven Hollingsworth.

Researchers suggest the most effective way to strengthen family functioning is by strengthening the quality of their support systems. Families that have friends, family members or others who are part of their life and offer information, support and guidance can get through difficult times without problems.

Parents often use these

systems of support for help on how to conduct themselves as parents, says Hollingsworth. Support systems are often more credible or influential than an “expert” at a parent education class. This type of support lets people know they’re cared for and not alone in the world.

“The training I received from Friendship with Families enhanced what I’m able to offer my clients,” said Karla Narcesse, a volunteer who is matched with a family. “My goal is to help the family adjust to their new environment,” adds Narcesse, who is also Baby-Find Executive Director and mentors pregnant teens.

The volunteer and family meet and develop a relationship. As time



Photo by Steven Hollingsworth

*Karla Narcesse (right), a volunteer in the Friendship with Families program, reaches out to help Vanessa Schulz acclimate to her new community.*

goes by, they do activities that help parents learn better parenting skills. “It’s truly amazing what a little support can do for families that really need it,” observes Hollingsworth.

## Gardens enhance pride for people in the urban community

*“Community gardens help people who don’t have access to land take more pride in their surroundings, observes UNCE horticulturist Angela O’Callaghan.”*

Since the Garden of Eden, people have appreciated gardens for their capacity to nourish and soothe. Now, with urbanization, community gardens help people who don’t have access to land take more pride in their surroundings, observes UNCE horticulturist Angela O’Callaghan.

UNCE faculty, staff and Master Gardener volunteers work with individuals and groups throughout Southern Nevada to create and maintain natural spaces. School gardens become educational forums, and neighborhood gardens, with individual plots for gardeners, dot the community.

Miriam Rodriguez is Director of Resident Services for Nevada HAND, a non-profit agency that develops affordable housing for low-income families and seniors. She wants her residents to be able to take care of their community. “I accomplished this by creating community gardens,” she said. “If people plant from seed, nurture and understand how much time and effort it takes to grow something, they take more pride in their surroundings.”

Many of our seniors tended gardens as homeowners, said Rodriguez. “Now they continue this

Photo by Marilyn Ming



David Miller, resident of Stewart-Pine Senior Apartments, tends their community garden.

practice in the community garden.”

As Southern Nevada continues to grow, observes O’Callaghan,

Cooperative Extension will continue to play an important role in improving the quality of life here.

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## Food for health and soul decreases risk of chronic disease

Photo by Millicent Braxton-Calhoun



Food for Health and Soul participants learn how to modify their favorite recipes to decrease the risk of chronic disease.

“I had no idea that if I cut back on salt and fats in my cooking, it would reduce my cholesterol level,” said Marcie Davis, a Food for Health and Soul program participant.

“Our goal is to decrease the risk of chronic disease among participants by encouraging families to modify their favorite family recipes and meals,” said Millicent Braxton-Calhoun, UNCE program coordinator. “This is easily done by decreas-

ing sugar, fat, salt and sodium, and increasing fiber-rich foods during food preparation.”

UNCE nutritionist Joyce Woodson trained 25 health coordinators to teach the six-lesson curriculum in the Las Vegas faith community. Classes include an overhead presentation, lesson handouts and food preparation ideas.

“During the class I found out my favorite cookies were so high in fat, calories and sodium, I decided to cut back on eating them!” said Davis.