

Facing social stigma — Extension provides research-based information on dementia

AT A GLANCE

University of Idaho Extension provided Dementia Friends information sessions throughout northern Idaho to help people change the way they think, act and talk about dementia.

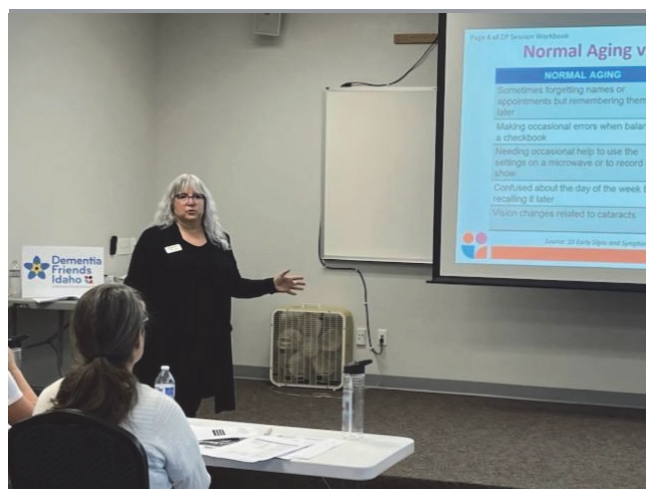
The Situation

Dementia is a general term for loss of memory and other thinking abilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life (www.alz.org). Dementia symptoms may be evident in more brain diseases, but Alzheimer's is the most well-known and common (60 to 80% of cases). Census data reports that approximately 17% of Idahoans are at risk for Alzheimer's due to being over 65 years of age. Experts report that the number of Idahoans diagnosed with Alzheimer's is predicted to grow substantially over the next five years.

The projected rise in rates of Alzheimer's increases the likelihood that individuals will come across someone in their community who is living with dementia. Dealing with the stigma surrounding dementia is often a concern for people living with a brain disease. A lack of public awareness and understanding of dementia perpetuates misinformation continuing to be shared, resulting in an increase in stigma related to dementia.

Our Response

Dementia Friends is a program designed to help community members learn more about what dementia is, understand what someone living with dementia



Teaching a Dementia Friends information session offered by University of Idaho Extension.

experiences, and move to action based on that understanding.

The family & consumer sciences educator in Nez Perce County and the health & fitness/nutrition educator in Idaho County are members of the University of Idaho Extension team certified by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare to provide the Dementia Friends program.

To encourage discussion about misconceptions and myths that drive stigma surrounding dementia, and to emphasize the value of open dialogue, the educators coordinated a road trip to introduce the program in-person throughout northern Idaho. They taught Dementia Friends sessions to 48 participants from 12

communities in Boundary, Latah, Nez Perce, Clearwater and Kootenai counties as well as the Nez Perce Reservation.

Program Outcomes

All Dementia Friends participants were asked to fill out a post-evaluation survey. The first part of the survey measured willingness to adopt some of the dementia friendly practices, and knowledge gained from the information session (see Table 1 for evaluation results). The second part of the survey asked the participants to agree to a dementia friendly action to be used in their personal/community lives (see Table 2 for evaluation results).

Table 1. Evaluation results to adopt practices

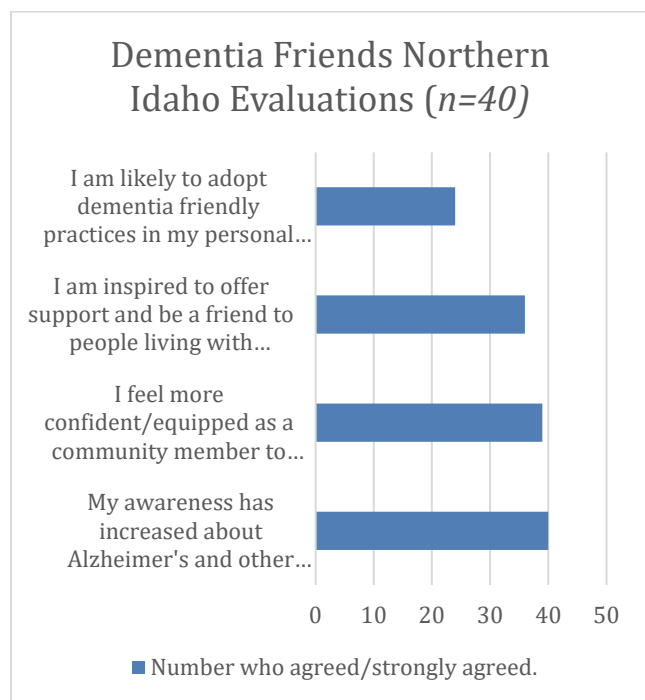
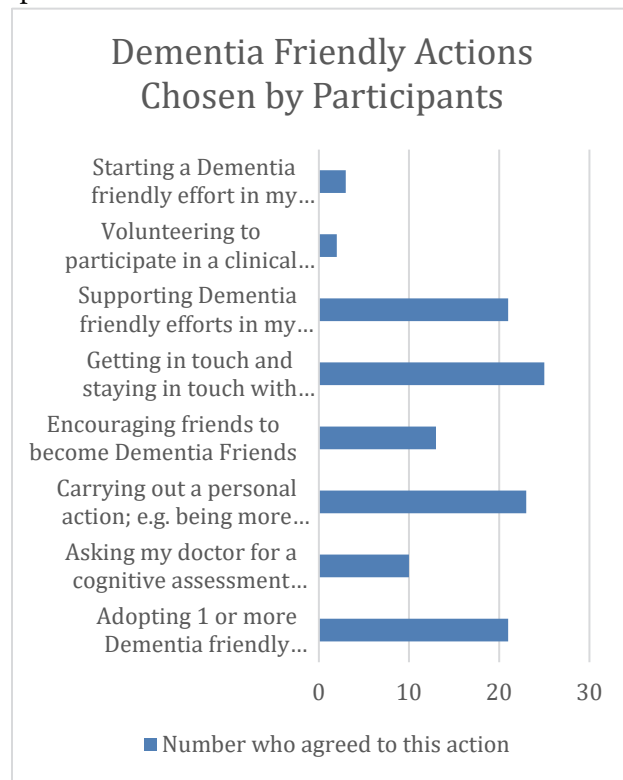


Table 2. Evaluation results of actions chosen by participants



The Future

The educators will teach Dementia Friends in Lewis, Shoshone and Benewah counties in winter 2024/spring 2025 to reach their goal of providing in-person presentations of this important topic in all 10 northern Idaho counties.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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