

Cooperative Extension's Marilyn Smith wins prestigious national award

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By Robert Mills

Work With At-Risk Youth and Families Creates Positive Impact

Marilyn Smith, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) professor, has been selected to receive the 2008 National Excellence in Extension Award by the National Association of State and Land Grant Colleges, November 9, at the NASULGC Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois. The Award for Excellence in Extension recognizes an individual from the Cooperative Extension system who excels at extension programming, makes a positive impact on constituents served and provides visionary leadership for the extension system.

As a youth development specialist for UNCE, Smith created programs and partnerships designed to improve the quality of life for at-risk youth and families in Nevada. Smith also developed programs for juvenile offenders which focus on life-skill development. Her programs, which are featured in many Nevada counties, have reduced the recidivism rates of juvenile offenders statewide -- creating large savings for taxpayers. Some programs like Just do it, Jr. and [Project MAGIC](#), which help at-risk elementary students and first-time juvenile offenders, have been implemented in many other states.

Smith has collaborated with other UNCE faculty to assist rural youth and families for 33 years. Her youth-development programs have been recognized as model extension programming on both a university and national level. Prior to this award, Smith's work with at-risk youth and families has been recognized 26 times nationally. She has received nearly \$5 million in grants and awards for her work in extension programming. The newest UNCE program, [Bootstraps](#), which Smith co-authored, focuses on the development of communication and leadership skills for 18 to 22-year-old young adults who are out of high school and unemployed.

Bill Evans, professor of UNCE's Department of Human Development and Family Studies, said Smith's leadership in extension programming is constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community.

"Marilyn has demonstrated leadership in a dizzying array of programming, scholarships and community outreach," Evans said. "She is always trying to improve her programs and bring the latest research knowledge to a broader audience. This is the essence of Extension."

Smith will be honored with the national award for her role as a youth development specialist at the Palmer House in Chicago, Illinois. She was chosen out of a pool of potential recipients from across the United States. All potential recipients exhibited exceptional extension programming. NASULGC awards one \$5,000 national award and five \$1,000 regional awards every year. Candidates eligible for an award must have been active in extension programming for at least five years.