HELPING COMMUNITIES—UI Rapid Response Design Team helps 8 small Idaho towns

SOUTHERN IDAHO’S EDEN AND HAZLETON share Wilson Lake reservoir, but wish it looked more inviting. Shoshone residents want a new 5-year master plan for the Lincoln County Fairgrounds. Heyburn residents want a facelift for their freeway exit so it looks more inviting.

University of Idaho landscape architecture students are working to address each issue. They are part of the University of Idaho Extension’s Rapid Response Design Team, led by Stephen Drown, faculty chair for landscape architecture and UI Extension’s landscape specialist. Students are from the University of Idaho’s College of Art and Architecture.

“Our students visited eight southern Idaho towns last summer as a follow-up to extension’s earlier Horizons program to help these small towns address poverty issues and seek ways to improve life in their towns,” said Drown. Students met with town citizens and drew sketches to capture local ideas. “It became clear that drawings are needed to show the rest of the community what is possible,” said Drown. “Our challenge is how to take these residents’ ideas, make them realistic, and turn them into projects at which the communities can succeed.”

Other towns that students visited last summer include Albion, interested in improving Main Street and a trail system; Menan, with ideas for their community center, a park, and school yard; Ririe wants to upgrade Memorial Park; and Roberts seeks Mustang Center Trail improvements.

Helping Drown this semester are two master’s students from China. The long history of Chinese workers in the West was not lost on Lu Ding who told Drown, “A hundred years ago we were here as laborers. Now we are here as professionals.” Also at work is student Zhenyu Liu.

UI students will complete their visits this spring to present final drawings to community members and UI Extension faculty.

The rapid response project has roots in Cascade. Students led by Drown met with community members in 2006, helping them to visualize and develop plans for a park and whitewater course. Now open is the resulting Kelly’s Whitewater Park. In all, 49 small communities throughout Idaho benefitted from the Horizons program that was funded by the Northwest Area Foundation and led by UI Extension. UI Extension faculty will help communities apply for grants or seek other support for their projects. Some projects may happen quickly; others may take years.

15,000 new maps to Palouse treasures

If visitors to north central Idaho don’t know about a B&B inside a beagle—towering alongside U.S. 95 near Cottonwood—or a new log lodge with hot tubs and kayaks on banks of U.S. Highway 12’s Clearwater River, they may stumble upon it.

Or, they may plan a special trip, thanks to a new 9-county map to artists, eateries, lodgings, scenic byways, historic sites, and much more in the flamboyant Artisann Trails, A Regional Guide—a 24” x 36” 4-color map that folds to fit in your purse.

It was created by University of Idaho Extension’s Lorie Higgins, Moscow, director of Two Degrees Northwest—a program supporting tourism and small businesses in the area between 45° and 47° latitude in north central Idaho and southeastern Washington. The map is Higgins’ latest effort to help artists and small businesses in scenic but financially strapped counties located between Riggins and Plummer. Some 15,000 maps are being distributed throughout the area’s tourist centers—38 towns and nearly 200 attractions. They include B&Bs and other lodging, restaurants—especially those featuring locally grown food—wineries, breweries, farms, gardens, farmers markets, galleries, studios, antiques, recreational, scenic, and historic sites, museums, and tours.

The map identifies 7 bike trails, where to rent bikes, plus 7 scenic byways, and a list of festivals and special events. The guide “will lead to the unique assets of our region—the people, places, and products that distinguish it from Anywhere USA,” says Higgins, who also organizes workshops to help small-town artists and entrepreneurs better market themselves. For a map, contact Higgins or Chris Darby at cdarby@uidaho.edu.