Beyond our delicious Aggie Ice Cream, one of the other things that makes Utah State University unique is our land-grant mission. While other colleges and universities across Utah engage in research and teaching, here at USU we also focus on Extension. This means some faculty and students carry out research, develop programs and resources based on the research, and then literally extend these resources to not only individuals and families across the state, but across the world!

In our HDFS department, a main focus and interest of mine is creating, researching, and sharing programs on parenting, couple relationships, and personal well-being. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. Brian Higginbotham, another Extension Specialist in our department, has received grants and contracts for more than a decade that focus on improving family relationships. With other faculty and students, we work together to develop and disseminate research-based educational programs across the state of Utah. These include stepfamily education, divorce education, couples education, parenting education, and even relationship education for adolescents in schools. You can learn more about these programs and trainings by visiting www.HealthyRelationshipsUtah.org.

Beyond these grant-funded programs, I work with agencies, schools, and other organizations to conduct trainings and presentations ranging from suicide prevention at high school assemblies to parenting trainings for foster parents and social workers. In addition to presentations at professional conferences that focus on research, Extension Specialists also present at local conferences and other meetings to spread messages of hope and happiness, and help others make informed decisions.

Another way I work to extend education is through the use of technology and social media. With more and more people turning to technology for information and education, I helped to create resources for websites and blogs, including www.relationships.usu.edu and www.utahmarriagematters.org. I also share regular tips on Facebook through @DrDaveUSU and have done “Facebook Live” with other Extension Specialists to share tips to strengthen families and personal skills. For the past two years I have also appeared as a monthly guest on Fox 13’s “The Place,” where I share tips related to happiness, parenting, and relationships. These are all ways to share research-based messages about families and flourishing.

In addition to my focus on strengthening relationships and improving personal well-being, HDFS Extension helps individuals and families in a variety of areas, including finances, nutrition, health, canning and food storage and much more. Visit http://extension.usu.edu/homeandfamily to learn more about the many areas where Extension makes a positive difference.

My faculty and extension position in the HDFS department at USU is not the only Extension position in the state. In most of the counties across Utah, there are county faculty positions where Extension faculty live and work in the counties. These positions usually require a Master’s degree in HDFS or a related field. Their aim is to help meet the needs of the people in their counties—at the local level. These county faculty are often looking for hard-working student interns throughout the year.

If you are interested in learning more about Extension, possible careers, or volunteering/working with me or other Extension faculty on applied projects, do not hesitate to reach out! Send me an email at david.schramm@usu.edu