

Connections

Good news highlighted amid state's challenges

Amid the somber events we've experienced this year regarding Nebraska's drought and the state's continuing economic challenges, it's always a pleasure to highlight good news where we find it, and talk of the things going right for our state.

This issue of *University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Connections* offers brief highlights of extension work statewide. In every case, extension education teaches, providing knowledge people can use to make informed decisions that improve or enhance their economic, social or environmental well-being, both now and in the future. Extension delivers education in agricultural profitability; children, youth and families; economic and community development; food safety, health and wellness; and natural resources and environment.

Extension education programs are valued by many, and through Nebraska's good and difficult times, extension continues working diligently to make a positive difference to people and communities.

We invite you to visit your local NU Cooperative Extension office, our Web site, <http://extension.unl.edu>, or call (402) 472-2966 for more information about extension education. Your feedback on Cooperative Extension education is welcome.

*Elbert Dickey, Dean and Director
University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension*

Food budgets, nutrition education improved

Low-resource Nebraskans improve how they shop and budget for food, and eat better with help from University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension nutrition programs.

About 73,650 Nebraska families have participated in extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Program since it started in 1969. More than 11,250 families have participated in the Food Stamp Nutrition Program since it began in 1994.

Of nutrition program graduates, 88 percent adopt better food dollar spending habits and 61 percent make food safety improvements, such as thawing meat in the refrigerator rather than on the counter. A Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services official said that partnering with extension provides nutrition education for up to 90 percent of the state's food stamp recipients, stretching their limited food stamp money.



Wanda Koszewski, NU Cooperative Extension nutrition specialist, coordinates extension's Nutrition Education Programs.

Biosecurity curriculum targets livestock safety

Awareness and caution are among the biosecurity practices taught by University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension to help protect the state's \$6 billion livestock industry from bioterrorism as well as common domestic and foreign animal diseases.

A new NU curriculum, provided by a \$250,000 federal grant, is being developed to train practicing veterinarians, extension specialists and veterinary students to help livestock producers use biosecurity production practices.

Biosecurity practices protect livestock from exposure to highly contagious

diseases such as foot-and-mouth, and more common diseases such as John's, an untreatable, debilitating intestinal cattle disease; or Bovine Virus Diarrhea, which causes reproductive disorders.

In food processing, NU food safety training programs teach awareness of potential bioterrorism through control and preventative measures that minimize health risks in the food supply. Food manufacturing and food safety programs already in place would inactivate the majority of biological agents, NU food safety experts said.

Children experience ag's tie to their lives

Children in several Nebraska communities see, feel and taste agriculture's connection to them, thanks to University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension education.

More than 11,000 children in second, third and fourth grades have participated in Life on the Farm and Ag Awareness Festivals at Columbus, Mead and Lincoln. They pet animals, run their fingers through buckets of grain, watch sheep shearing and eat snacks made from corn and soybeans. Schoolchildren and their teachers learn the importance of the people who put food on their plates, and that products such as sweaters, footballs and ethanol have their origins on the farm.

The Columbus event is part of extension's 4-H school enrichment program. The Mead and Lincoln festivals are organized by the Ag Awareness Coalition, whose membership includes extension, agricultural interest organizations and agribusiness.

Did you know?

— Cooperative Extension is the front door to the University of Nebraska for many people, extending the university's resources throughout the state.

— Extension delivers the university's research-based resources by direct teaching, publications, Web sites and exciting new technology such as satellite conferencing and Internet video streaming.

Centennial year a time to eye 4-H future

4-H in Nebraska helped celebrate the national 4-H centennial throughout 2002, both locally and at the state level.

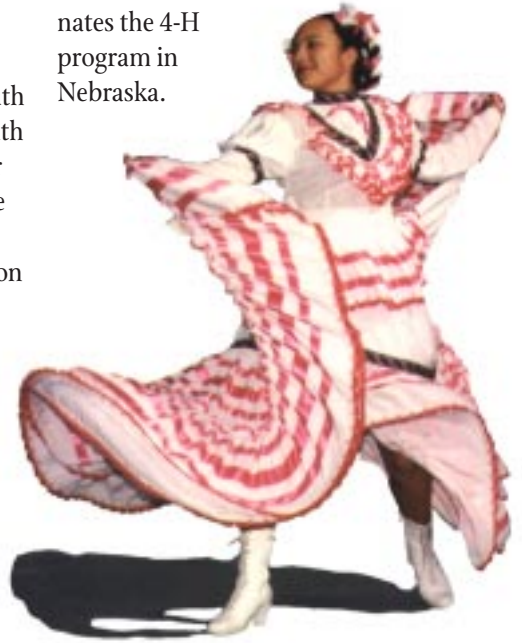
The statewide celebration included local, state and national conversations involving more than 2,000 Nebraska youth and adults, who recommended ways youth can contribute to, and volunteer in, their communities. Nebraska 4-H has used the conversation results to create a five-part plan that will guide the youth organization during the next three to five years.

The 2002 Nebraska State Fair was the site for the state 4-H alumni reunion and breakfast attended by 600 people, a vintage fashion show and 4-H Clover Mint ice cream social. Early fall brought an auction of an original Garfield print by 4-H alum Jim Davis, with half the proceeds going to Nebraska 4-H. 4-H also is being featured in a yearlong display at the Nebraska State Historical Society's Museum of Nebraska History.

National 4-H Week Oct. 6-12 capped the centennial festivities, with an eye to expanding new member and volunteer

interest in 4-H.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension coordinates the 4-H program in Nebraska.



Teresa Arredondo of Lexington, a member of the Orgullo Latino 4-H Club, performs a cultural dance during the NU Cooperative Extension 4-H centennial reunion breakfast at the 2002 Nebraska State Fair.

Market Journal offers risk management education

Weather and low commodity prices traditionally have meant business risks for agricultural producers. Today's risks are higher and the stakes greater, as they include factors such as increased farm sizes, global competition and more variable markets.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's *Market Journal* provides risk management education to help producers meet these challenges. The Internet-based program helps producers develop strategic production, marketing and financial alternatives, and ways they can respond to

the world markets. Many risk management tools such as production techniques and crop insurance also are discussed. Of participants responding to one *Market Journal* survey, 73 percent said they've made marketing changes as a result of the program.

A new *Market Journal* program is webcast at 8 p.m. the second and fourth Thursdays monthly at <http://marketjournal.unl.edu>, and is available for viewing at participating extension offices.

Partners with Nebraska

Land-grant universities work with the people they serve. NU's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources does so in priority areas of food, agriculture, agribusiness, natural resources, people and communities. We teach, discover new knowledge through research, and extend that new, unbiased information across the state and beyond through extension.



University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension is part of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educational programs abide with the non-discrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Sandhills Leadership builds involvement

Declining populations are among the challenges that can leave rural areas short on people ready and willing to become involved with community issues.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Sandhills Leadership Program is building community leadership in seven sparsely populated counties. Participants, who range from high school students to senior citizens, enhance ethical leadership as well as personal and professional development.

Nearly 90 percent of the program's 75 participants said they've been positively influenced to become more involved in

their communities. Many have reached across geographic regions to help others.

The program helped one senior citizen overcome her fear of public speaking and she now speaks up regularly after being elected to her village board. "I never would have done it otherwise," she said.

Added one high school participant: "This program taught me that anybody can be a leader. It taught me the good qualities of a leader such as listening and communication skills. It also taught me to look at other points of view before I decide on a point of action."

Chicory grown, processed in western Nebraska

The chicory industry emerging in Nebraska's Panhandle is rooted in University of Nebraska efforts since 1995, when NU Cooperative Extension specialists helped develop its potential.

As a result, the nation's only chicory processing plant, at Scottsbluff, was up and running in fall 2001, boosting the local economy and providing 50-75 seasonal jobs.

Chicory roots contain large quantities of inulin, a carbohydrate that stimulates beneficial bacterial growth in human and pet digestive systems. Chicory processed in western Nebraska goes into several lines of one company's dog and cat foods.

About 1,200 acres of chicory were



Chicory grown and harvested in Nebraska's Panhandle is processed at the nation's only chicory processing plant at Scottsbluff. NU Cooperative Extension helped develop chicory's potential in the state.

planted in 2002, with acreage expected to triple next year. If Panhandle chicory acreage increases to a projected 10,000 acres by 2005, growers could gross \$10 million, providing yields and prices are ideal.

Pre-harvest conference boosts women's morale

Women have long been partners on Nebraska farms and ranches, managing the marketing and farm budgets, while working with lenders and tending to family needs.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension provides opportunities for farm and ranch women to learn more about managing financial aspects of their businesses and livelihoods. The annual Women in Agriculture conference, believed to be the longest-running of its kind nationwide, boosts morale while enhancing participants' knowledge and skill levels. Since 1984, nearly 6,500 people have attended, about half of whom were sponsored by their lending institutions.

The conference has led to expanded extension educational and networking opportunities for women, including marketing classes, tours and a western Nebraska women's ag conference. A new women's risk management group, focusing on record-keeping and family commitments, is slated to gear up in early 2003.

Backyard Farmer a perennial favorite

Many Nebraskans love their yards and gardens and need objective, research-based advice on keeping them healthy while protecting the environment. Since 1953, the *Backyard Farmer* television program has been among the most popular ways for University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension to deliver this educational information.

Backyard Farmer is a perennial favorite on Nebraska Educational Television, where it has aired for almost 50 years. It is believed to be the nation's longest-running gardening show. Panelists answer viewer questions live on the weekly summer program.

Today's *Backyard Farmer* has its own Web site at <http://backyardfarmer.unl.edu>, which features a searchable database for specific topics.

Workshops identify water quality risks

Some homeowners along the 100-mile Lower Platte River corridor have identified ways to keep their water supplies safer, based on knowledge gained from University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension water wellness education.

The corridor's shallow groundwater table and nearby surface waters could become contaminated from normal household activities, due to the concentration of 30,000 people living there.

Extension helped sponsor a dozen meetings identifying water quality risks in 2000-2001. As a result, participant knowledge doubled and people said they were much more willing to make changes to reduce water risks. About 360 people took voluntary, confidential water quality risk assessments, after which 42 percent of participating survey respondents changed a practice to protect their health and the environment, such as installing drinking water treatment systems and newer septic systems, or having their septic tanks pumped more frequently.

The water wellness program was done in cooperation with the Lower Platte River Corridor Alliance.

Termite facts increase homeowner confidence

Termites in the home can intimidate homeowners, but University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension workshops provide educational facts to help owners make informed and confident decisions to control them.

More than 1,200 homeowners have participated in 25 workshops that teach termite biology, economics and control. Participant surveys have shown the knowledge gained saves each person an average of more than \$300.

Representatives of pest control companies and commercial housing and building units also have participated in the workshops, as have more than 80 real estate agents earning education credits from them.

Steps for Health can improve overall vitality

Walk — there's no need to run.

Just walking can lower blood pressure, reduce chronic disease and improve overall health and vitality — important factors given today's sedentary living.

Steps for Health, a University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension walking program, encourages participants to work up to at least 30 minutes of accumulated exercise daily. Walking is among the best ways to exercise because it can be done at almost any age in a variety of settings.

In 2002 "Steps" was coordinated in at least 26 Nebraska counties, with between 2,400 and 2,500 participants recording their daily walking using pedometers and log sheets.

Extension teams with local health departments, clinics, hospitals and home health agencies in coordinating Steps for

Health, which includes information on associated topics such as weight management, proper footwear and melanoma due to sun exposure.



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<http://extension.unl.edu>

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