

August 14, 2024 -Week of August 19
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Buffalo County Extension

History of Buffalo County Extension Service and Home Extension Clubs

A couple of weeks before the fair this year, a gal stopped in and brought a large poster and book that was written on the History of Buffalo County Extension. The book was written by Jane Stubbs in 1982-1983. Although I did not grow up in Buffalo County, the 4-H program here has served me very well in my time working here and I hope those of you that have been here longer than me enjoy learning more about the history of Extension in Buffalo County too. All information shared in this article is from this book, and all credit goes to Jane Stubbs!

Extension Services was introduced to Buffalo County in September of 1918. The Buffalo County Farn Bureau promoted Extension, provided the office space, and was the large part of the advisory board. It took two hundred signatures from the county to get money appropriated to fund the extension program. P.H Stewart was the first County Agent and served for 15 months before moving to the State Extension team. Although the need for having an Extension System in Buffalo County was recognized and participation was rising over the years, in 1925, support by taxation was withdrawn and extension was entirely supported by member dues. This didn't last long though, because in 1927 the county supervisors voted to reinstate tax funds to support the Extension Program. Shortly after, in 1929, Ruth Davis, was hired as an Assistant County Agent.

Although Extension was not officially brought into Buffalo County until 1918, clubs were formed by 1909. The Pioneer Club, East Lawn Kensington, and Glenwood Kensington were the first few to form. Although these clubs look very different than most of our clubs today, they started the foundation. In one year, over 150 dress forms were made by the members of these clubs. In our office now and across the state, there are Food and Nutrition Educators that focus on the health of Nebraskans. This is not much different than in the early 1900s. In 1921, the Miller Community Fair sponsored a Children's Health Conference and over 90 children were examined at the fair. They even got prizes!

In 1930, Ruth Davis Hill resigned, and Greta Brown was hired. The number of Project Clubs was over 40 by this time and there was a need for more. There were Group Chairmen elected from each town in Buffalo County to help with trainings and serve on an advisory board. There was a lot of turnovers in the 30s and 40s in the Extension Staff. The depression took a toll on the clubs in Buffalo County. Optimism was low in the early 40s because people didn't have the finances or energy to be spent on Extension work. The work of Extension began to shift during this time, and

was teaching people necessities to survive, but by the mid-40s WWII was over and things began to shift again. Extension clubs began to focus on redesigning things of their home as well as focusing on relationship building as more people were moving to towns vs being on the farms.

This is the first of two stories I will write. Check back in mid-September to learn more about each club! Or, if you would like to read the book yourself, stop by the Extension Office, and we can lend it out!

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Nebraska Ext in Buffalo County

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