

CONNECT

Farm/ranch business management programs for women include conference Sept. 13-14

Gloria Patrick has managed the family farm operation near Grant since a University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension marketing class six years ago gave her knowledge and confidence to do so.

"If I hadn't taken that marketing class ... I wouldn't be able to do what I'm doing today," said Patrick, a former high school para-educator. Patrick's husband manages their cattle and works off the farm, while their son does the farming.

Extension's class put the information "at a level you can understand," said Patrick, who takes care of all their farm paperwork and markets grain from their 2,500 acres of corn and soybeans. "It has all become so natural to me."

Deb Rood facilitates extension's farm/ranch business management programs for women, which include a fall Women in Agriculture (WIA) conference, now in its 17th year and the longest running of its kind nationally.

Rood said the programs emphasize women's roles as part of a farming operation and teach participants marketing strategies. "There's a lot of value in

feeling you're valued and making a contribution," she noted.

Extension's programs help women understand marketing so they can become informed marketers and be able to credibly discuss the markets with everyone from family members to brokers, Rood said, adding, "When the team members respect each other, they then become an actual management team—that's when they become strong."

Ag women are more committed to an operation than hired help, Rood said, because the operation is the family livelihood. Understanding marketing not only strengthens the operation but can equal income from an off-farm job while allowing a woman to stay home, she added.

About 625 women annually participate in extension's ag women programs, which besides marketing classes include trips to the Chicago Board of Trade and the annual WIA conference in Kearney, Rood said.

The WIA conference is intended to be a "picker-upper" just prior to the stresses of fall harvest by offering humor, inspiration and quality information, as well as networking opportunities, Rood said. She added one family saved significantly on taxes after hearing a WIA presentation, and another saved its sow herd from disease after learning about disease



Brett Hampton

Deb Rood, facilitator for NU Cooperative Extension farm/ranch business management programs for women, emphasizes women's roles in agricultural operations.

symptoms in a conversation with another participant, and calling the veterinarian.

A group of Australian women is expected to attend this year's Sept. 13-14 WIA conference. Seventeen workshop topics include tax law updates, record keeping, communications, retirement and estate planning, and other agricultural management issues determined by focus groups.

Many ag lenders sponsor farm women's attendance because they know the importance of their customers being better educated, Rood said. Of the approximately 475 attending the WIA conference annually, about half are past participants.

"We want to be good enough to have them keep coming back," Rood said.

— Cheryl Alberts

Rood can be contacted at (800) 535-3456. For more information about the WIA conference and marketing programs, see <http://wia.urned.edu/>.

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Dean's comments

It's fair time in Nebraska, and if you haven't been to a county fair – or the state fair – for awhile, now's the time to think about attending.

Browse the 4-H exhibits; see the creativity and results of learning; sit in the stands while 4-H'ers show their animals. Watch their faces. Celebrate with them this culmination of effort; share in this event that has a long and proud Nebraska heritage; think of all fairs have offered participants over the years, and continue to offer.

A survey asked northeast Nebraska 4-H alums if participating in county fairs made a difference in their lives. Their answer: a resounding yes.

Ninety-five percent of the 43 alums surveyed indicated they learned to set and accomplish project goals as a result of their participation. Ninety-three percent said they learned how to meet new people and build relationships; 91 percent said they learned responsibility and to win and lose graciously. Eighty-one percent mentioned honesty as a skill learned through county fair participation.

Those surveyed ranked as most important:

- developing strong character traits such as responsibility;
- learning leadership skills such as management;
- working as a family.

Here are two comments from 4-H alums describing how they use skills learned through 4-H participation in county fairs, and how those skills affected their careers:



Elbert Dickey

“The four H's [head, heart, hands, health] have helped develop the person I am today. I help students obtain financial aid for college. I deal with a wide diversity of people. I learned how to follow through with a project and get the job done right. Being involved in 4-H

prepared me for a successful career.”

“4-H participation taught me the importance of setting and accomplishing goals. Also, many of the good character traits that I learned through 4-H participation are put into practice daily. The time spent with my family working on 4-H projects is priceless.”

Every now and then someone suggests to me that fairs are outdated and old-fashioned.

I look at what these 4-H alums say about their experiences; I watch the eager, interested faces of those involved in fairs today, and I believe fairs are far from outdated. I think they're a time-honored, wholesome educational tradition. I hope you'll be part of it.

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

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August 2001

Volume 1, Number 3

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Connect is published three times a year by the Communications and Information Technology unit at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln under the auspices of the Dean of University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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There is no charge for this newsletter. Each issue describes a few of University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's ongoing, widely diverse programs. The newsletter is an informal report to interested taxpayers. Please send comments, questions and subscription requests to: Editor, NU Cooperative Extension Connect, 108 Agricultural Communications Building, P.O. Box 830918, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE 68583-0918.

Upon request, this publication can be made available in an alternative format for people with disabilities. For assistance call (402) 472-3031.

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Communications, cultural expectations topics at Native American leadership workshops

Eleanor Baxter knows the importance some cultures attach to looking people in the eye, especially during job interviews.

Good eye contact equals good communication in many cultures, but for Baxter's Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, traditionally eye contact while speaking is disrespectful.

Baxter, who formerly lived and worked outside the Omaha tribe reservation, stresses the importance of eye contact and other communication tools to clients of her Workforce Investment Program, a federal job training program in Macy. She tells clients that employers want enthusiasm and "you have to get yourself going and have to learn how to communicate."

Communications and cultural expectations were taught at University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Native American Leadership Development workshops at Macy last year. Baxter said she enrolled herself and 22 clients, and plans to use some techniques learned there for her own training.

Janet Nielsen, extension educator in Thurston County, and Carolyn Fiscus, director of the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Department of Native American Studies and Winnebago tribal member, adapted a mainstream leadership program to develop the Native American leadership workshops. They incorporated Native American humor, ceremony and culture into sessions on public speaking, discovering personalities, understanding different learning styles, organization, leadership language and community involvement, as well as communication.

"When people have this kind of information, they have some hope, some idea of what they can do. People just gobble it up," Nielsen said.

While employment leads to self-sufficiency, Baxter said the reservation's limited transportation and telephone services restrict employment opportunities, and most communication on the

reservation takes place by word-of-mouth. Workshop participants addressed these limitations and provided suggestions to keep themselves motivated afterward, Nielsen said.

Baxter said reservation residents deal with teen births and alcohol abuse as well as unemployment. "The workshop captured all of us—there's so much to be done here," Baxter said. "As a (workshop) group, maybe we can make a difference and tell our younger people to 'better your lives.'"

Sixty-five Native Americans have participated in extension's leadership training, which got its start with Nancy Lang, who also helped provide scholarships for many early participants and who retired in May.

Of last year's 47 participants, 77 percent indicated a significant increased interest in community issues and 68 percent believed they could make a difference in their community as a result of the training, Nielsen said. She added 12 participants started a task force to address social issues such as youth violence.

Nielsen said the Native American leadership program could be useful to members of other tribes, as well as urban Native Americans.

"This curriculum can work for all," she said.



Janet Nielsen, left, NU Cooperative Extension educator in Thurston County, and Eleanor Baxter, director of the federal Workforce Investment Program in Macy, discuss extension's Native American Leadership Development workshops at the Omaha Tribal Council Chambers. Sixty-five Native Americans have participated in the program, which includes Native American humor, ceremony and culture.

Additional grant-funded extension programs being delivered in Thurston County in partnership with more than a dozen federal, state, tribal and educational entities include providing improvisational theater, community computer access, park improvements and youth networking.

— Cheryl Alberts

Nielsen can be contacted at (402)846-5656.

Mead magnet school offers four agricultural sciences career tracks; fifth starts this fall

Success for the nation's first rural agricultural sciences magnet school, located within Mead High School (MHS), has been so great that coordinators hope to expand the curriculum into other schools in the next 15 months.

A magnet school is one that draws together students with similar interests, said Bob Meduna, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educator in Saunders County. Meduna and Dan Duncan, director of NU's 9,500-acre Agricultural Research and Development Center (ARDC) near Mead, linked NU experts with MHS teachers to revamp Mead's agricultural sciences curriculum to emphasize biotechnology, precision agriculture, global positioning and more.

Mead's magnet school provides a seamless education for high school graduates to better prepare them for the NU system, the workforce or community colleges, Meduna said. It offers four agricultural sciences career tracks – agricultural technology, agribusiness, food

science and plant science – with animal science to be added this fall.

Agricultural sciences graduates enter fields such as food processing, distribution, transportation, agribusiness, nutrition, horticulture, landscaping and production, Meduna noted. While fewer than 2 percent of the nation's population is involved with production agriculture, in Nebraska one in four jobs depends on it.

"Agriculture is crying out for people with agricultural backgrounds," said Angela Leifeld, MHS principal. "Several kids who have never been in an ag class before took two and three classes last year and are signed up for this fall. It has definitely blossomed into something I never imagined."

Eighty percent of MHS's 87 students enrolled in the optional agricultural sciences courses in fall 2000, the first year they were offered, Leifeld said; all MHS students are required to take agricultural literacy and select between introduction to agricultural business or entrepreneurship

courses. Some Mead agricultural sciences courses already are offered to other schools via distance learning; plans are to expand using the web or satellite.

Besides incorporating NU expertise into the high school curriculum, the Mead magnet school includes internships, lab work and, as an added plus, on-farm research at ARDC, all of which develop a more viable school and community, Duncan said.

"The school system needs to be strong and viable to keep the community strong and viable ... if we can do this we can create communities the kids will want to come back to," Duncan said.

Casey Bryan, an MHS senior, said the magnet school has given him a wide range of experiences applicable to his summer and after-school horticultural job at ARDC.

"It gets you started on an early career," Bryan said.

One or two other high schools developing agricultural sciences magnet curriculum are expected to be announced this fall. Magnet school success depends upon full cooperation between school and extension officials, Meduna said. "Extension is the tie we're banking on to move this across the state" because extension has a presence in every county, Meduna said, adding business support also is key to magnet schools' success.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation grants help fund the magnet schools.

— Cheryl Alberts

Meduna can be contacted at (402) 624-8030; Duncan at (402) 624-8011.



Bob Meduna, left, NU Cooperative Extension educator in Saunders County, helped launch the first rural agricultural sciences magnet school at Mead High School, working with Angela Leifeld, right, MHS principal. The school offers a wide range of experiences for students such as Casey Bryan, center, an MHS senior.

Nutrition education helps people learn to feed families healthy food on limited budgets

Roxanne Gunn says she had been lacking calcium in her diet – something she didn't realize until taking the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) offered by University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension.

EFNEP provides nutrition education to Douglas, Sarpy, Lancaster, Adams and Hall county families with limited resources.

"I learned I needed more calcium," said the 18-year-old Lincoln woman, whose daughter was born in May. Because she doesn't drink milk, Gunn said she has added yogurt and cheese to her diet. She also has started eating other healthy foods.

"When I make a meal I try to have fruit and vegetables," Gunn said. "Before I would just eat macaroni and cheese."

Gunn, who began the EFNEP program in February, said learning to cook and eat properly has been fun. "It's better than reading it out of a textbook and that's why I like it," she added.

Since it began in 1969, EFNEP has reached more than 71,000 families.

"It helps them with learning how to feed their family healthy and nutritious food on a limited budget," said Wanda Koszewski, NU nutrition specialist.

A companion Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNEP) provides nutritional education to people receiving food stamps. It is offered in 26 counties and has served more than 8,800 families since beginning in 1994. That program was one of three nationwide to win an award for excellence in nutrition education from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service's food stamp program.

"Our goal is to help people stretch those food stamp dollars," Koszewski said.

EFNEP and FSNEP lessons include basic nutrition, the food guide pyramid, food preparation and safety, menu

planning and grocery shopping.

"We do see changes in the families that participate," Koszewski said, adding there are improvements in the variety of healthy foods eaten, as well as changes in participants' shopping behavior and how they handle their resources.

To identify clientele, extension partners with agencies such as the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Head Start, Catholic Social Services and the Women, Infants and Children program, as well as food banks and community centers.

Mike Harris, administrator of food programs for DHHS, said the state's partnership with the university provides education to 85 percent to 90 percent of the state's food stamp recipients. It has taught them how to make the best use of their food stamp money, he said.

"You only get money for the bare necessities and you have to have some skill in how to spend that money," Harris said. "We've had a lot of good reports."

Nutrition programs are important in today's society because often people haven't learned proper nutrition, Koszewski said. Plus, easy availability of



Creay/Alberts

Wanda Koszewski, NU nutrition specialist, coordinates NU Cooperative Extension's Nutrition Education Programs to help people learn to feed their families healthy, nutritious food on a limited budget. Participants learn about the food guide pyramid, food preparation and safety, and more.

convenience food does little to promote nutrition, she said, adding, "It's a societal thing. We don't believe in preparing food anymore."

The programs have proven successful. Extension's research shows 88 percent of program graduates adopt better nutritional habits, 87 percent learn better ways to spend their food dollars and 61 percent make food safety improvements.

— Lori McGinnis

Koszewski can be contacted at (402)472-7966.

Check out Cooperative Extension's web site at:
<http://extension.unl.edu/>

Extension provides facts on foot-and-mouth disease

When reports of foot-and-mouth disease in Great Britain this year heightened Nebraskans' interest in the disease, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension specialists provided information to help people better understand two often-confused, highly publicized foreign livestock diseases.

In weeks of daily media interviews David Smith, NU dairy/beef veterinarian and biosecurity expert, explained differences between foot-and-mouth and bovine spongiform encephalopathy, known as BSE or "mad cow" disease. Smith and colleagues developed publications, videoconferences and web sites for producers, 4-H'ers and the public.

Foot-and-mouth and BSE were topics at a weekly roundtable he chairs with federal and state officials, veterinarians and producers to facilitate communications and foster relationships.

Smith noted U.S. international travel measures are in place to avoid foot-and-mouth disease, as are U.S. livestock feed regulations preventing BSE. Precautions for foreign livestock diseases also help prevent domestic diseases, he said, so the heightened awareness has additional benefits. Livestock is important to Nebraska's economy, and many other industries are tied to it, Smith said, adding, "If the livestock industry suffers, lots of other industries suffer with it. They're all interrelated."

Foot-and-mouth is a highly communicable viral disease of hogs, cattle, sheep, goats and deer, causing severe losses of milk and meat. The United States has been free of it since 1929.

BSE, affecting the central nervous system of cattle, is transmitted by eating an infectious protein. No BSE has been diagnosed in the United States.

— Cheryl Alberts

Smith can be contacted at (402) 472-2362. Information on foot-and-mouth and BSE is available at <http://www.iarr.unl.edu/>.

Recommendations made on job training services for youth

Nebraska youth entering today's workplace often find themselves unprepared for job responsibilities, according to two University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension faculty who researched the level of job training services available to youth ages 14-21 in 88 rural Nebraska counties.

"There's a huge gap in some areas—there's no service being offered," said Kathleen Lodl, 4-H youth development specialist.

Lodl and Jeff Hart, special projects extension educator, completed a resource mapping project describing current youth employment and training services. They surveyed 400 people and organizations that serve youth, about half of whom responded, and conducted five regional focus groups of youth and adults.

The survey was conducted in partnership with Nebraska Workforce Development for the Greater Nebraska Workforce

Investment Board Youth Council.

"They (surveys) indicate there is not a lot out there for youth," Hart said.

Lodl's and Hart's recommendations to improve youth workforce training were given to the youth council, which plans to present them to the Workforce Investment Board in August along with suggested actions related to the recommendations.

One recommendation, putting a database of statewide youth employment and training services on the web, was expected online in July. Other recommendations include regional and statewide sessions to review and make recommendations about youth services, and developing training for employers on working with youth, including character education.

— Lori McGinnis

Lodl can be contacted at (402) 472-9012; Hart at (402) 472-4743.

Bovine babies

Gage County 4-H clubs have their own version of Chicago's 1999 Cow on Parade—12 fiberglass bovine babies were painted by Gage County 4-H club members for display at this year's Gage County Fair and Expo, and elsewhere. The calves will be kept by sponsoring donors or auctioned off with proceeds supporting Gage County 4-H. Jeremy Fast, a member of the Best Foot Forward 4-H Club, paints this calf in colors representing Character Counts!, an NU Cooperative Extension 4-H program teaching trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Jane Esau, 4-H assistant in Gage County, touches up the calf's eye. Jeremy is the son of Vern Fast and Michelle Fast, both Beatrice.



Cheryl Alberts

Crop management workshops in Panhandle include info on crop disease, irrigation, tillage, more

Knowledge gained at crop management workshops offered by the University of Nebraska Panhandle Research and Extension Center in Scottsbluff is so important to Will Eitzman that he has attended several sessions.

Eitzman, business development manager for the Panhandle Co-op in Scottsbluff, said he has learned valuable technical information and tips on how to manage crops such as dry beans, sugar beets and corn.

"It's vitally important to agriculture," he said.

The workshops are hands-on sessions conducted in the field by extension personnel from the Panhandle center, said C. Dean Yonts, a workshop instructor and past coordinator, and NU irrigation engineer.

"The biggest benefit they're going to get out of it is they get some fairly individualized teaching in the field that you're not going to find in a classroom session," Yonts said.

About 35 to 40 farmers, crop consultants, agribusiness professionals, agricul-

tural chemical dealers, extension educators and others take the two-day workshops, held twice every August, Yonts said.

Participants learn about crop disease and fertility, irrigation, machinery, tillage and other topics. The workshops have drawn participants from states surrounding Nebraska and even Canada, Yonts said. Continuing education credits are given.

The workshops focused only on crop injuries when they began in 1990. Yonts said the focus changed in 1994 to deal with crop management.

Following a 1999 workshop on sugar beets, 60 participants placed a median value of \$45 per acre on the knowledge they gained, or over \$6 million in total value based on the participants and the



Shari Rose

C. Dean Yonts, center, NU irrigation engineer, talks with NU Panhandle Research and Extension employees David Reichert, left, and Dick Gatch, about how soil water moves in the soil and how to determine when irrigation is needed. Irrigation will be Yonts' topic at crop management workshops focusing on dry beans Aug. 13-14 and 15-16 in Scottsbluff.

acres involved, Yonts said. He added pre- and post-tests indicated participants improved their knowledge base by 103 percent.

— Lori McGinnis

Yonts can be contacted at (308)632-1246.

Educational videoconferences, expos help ag producers hone their risk management skills

Agricultural producers long have had little or no influence on commodity prices, leaving them financially vulnerable, said Doug Jose, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension farm management specialist.

That's why risk management skills are critical, Jose said.

He noted national and international policies such as gradual removal of traditional federal price supports, which assure consumers an abundant, low-cost U.S. food supply and producers a financial safety net; an expanding global economy; and increased South American agricultural production add even more financial uncertainty.

Plus, as U.S. farms get larger, so do

their financial risks.

"It's a continuing thing – the stakes continue to get bigger and bigger, farm sizes increase and the markets are more variable," Jose said.

Extension provides risk management education, including Market Journal videoconferences and Corn/Soybean Expos that teach such things as strategic marketing alternatives, the role of crop insurance in a marketing plan and Nebraskans' place in a global market, Jose said.

Market Journal, now in its second year, features updates by market analysts, grain merchandisers, NU faculty and producers. It is downlinked at 21 sites statewide at 8 p.m. the second Thursday of

the month through December and is archived at <http://marketjournal.unl.edu/>. A second online-only program on fourth Thursdays features livestock.

Hands-on winter Corn/Soybean Expos, supported in part by state commodity boards, offer skills in calculating returns using crop insurance and forward pricing, Jose said.

Market Journal and the expos have had nearly 1,000 participants in the last two years, Jose said. Of Market Journal participants responding to a 2000 survey, 73 percent said they've made marketing changes as a result of the program.

— Cheryl Alberts

Jose can be contacted at (402)472-1749.

Sandhills Leadership program participants can build skills, learn more about local issues

Marie Honeywell of Dunning had never done any public speaking. The thought scared her to death.

"I couldn't even get up in front of people at all," she said.

But after taking University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Sandhills Leadership course in 1997-98, Honeywell, 74, successfully completed her first public speaking assignment and was even elected to the Dunning Village Board.

"I would never have done it otherwise," she said.

The skill-building leadership program, which will begin its fifth year in September, has graduated about 60 residents from seven area counties, said Brent Plugge, NU extension educator from the Central Sandhills Area extension office in Theftord and program coordinator.

The course began in 1997 with a grant from the Nebraska Forest Service, which awarded another grant the following year to continue it. The program is now self-sufficient with a \$50 fee to participate.

The program seeks to help participants increase personal development and awareness of local issues, improve character and encourage community involvement, Plugge said.

Honeywell said she wanted to take the program because "I wanted to learn to be a leader." She has since led several organizations, and her interest in community issues prompted her to run for the village board.

"Communities need a good leadership base, especially if they're going to move forward," said Plugge, citing such rural Nebraska concerns as school consolidations and declining populations.

Participants in the leadership course attend sessions one day a month between September and April. Each session contains three lessons - ethical leadership, personal and professional development and a panel discussion on various community topics. Participants range from high school students to senior citizens.

"I think that they take it because they want to become better leaders and have some ability to influence local concerns or local issues," Plugge said.

Some of the participants already are community leaders. Loretta Hamilton, a rancher from Theftord, was active in the community when she took the course in 1998-99, and became more involved afterward.

"I thought it was great," Hamilton said of the course. "The format was so interesting. The panel discussions were tremendous. It was such a learning experience."

Hamilton said she hopes the course encourages Sandhills youth to stay in their communities to provide more employees for area businesses.

"We don't think about the value of community. This opened our eyes to the value of community," Hamilton said.

Sue Pearman, an extension assistant in the Sandhills office and a co-leader of the program, said she has enjoyed seeing high school students learn from the sessions.

"To watch the teens grow in their leadership abilities is probably what



Lori McGinnis

Theftord rancher Loretta Hamilton, left, is a past participant of the Sandhills Leadership course. Brent Plugge, center, NU Cooperative Extension educator in the Central Sandhills Area extension office in Theftord and Sue Pearman, right, extension assistant, co-lead the program.

impressed me the most," Pearman said.

— Lori McGinnis

Plugge and Pearman can be contacted at (308)645-2267.



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