2008 Accomplishment Report

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University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension specializes in teaching educational programs based on research. We are the link between the research of the land-grant university system and the application of that research to improve people's lives.

The Southeast Research and Extension Center is a part of the Extension Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR). The Extension educators and assistants serve both rural and urban needs in the 28 counties of southeast Nebraska. They serve as an important link between the communities, their local needs and the University. We serve 71% of the state's population in both urban and rural communities. We have a large number of people who live on acreages. The soil, climate conditions, agronomic systems and population diversity are significantly different from east to west and north to south.

Extension is a partnership between the federal government USDA (10% federal funds) and the land grant university (49% state funds), county government (15% county funds) and grants, contracts and fees (26% other funds).

During 2006 the Southeast Research and Extension District staff conducted a self-study and strategic planning process. The study gave us an opportunity to dialogue on the future direction of our programs and how we engage clientele in planning. The process to identify emerging issues began with input from the people we serve. Faculty also assessed emerging issues by looking at trends and research in their respective disciplines. Through discussion and interactions we gained new insights into our program and developed new partnerships. Our goal is to continue to provide relevant, responsive and high quality educational programs based on unbiased University resources to help Nebraskans improve the quality of life.

This document is a brief summary of the emerging issues, successful programs and targeted outcomes for future programs.
Current and Emerging Issues

Citizens living in both urban and rural areas of Nebraska are concerned about the vitality of their communities and neighborhoods. They want viable employment in places where they choose to live.

Communities have people with untapped talents who can make their communities a better place to live, work and raise families.

The region coined the Flatwater Metroplex will be the home of more than two million people by 2050 (UNL Bureau of Business Research).

Cities surrounding the metro areas are growing at a rapid rate (24% – 106% increase between 2000 and 2005).

Omaha will have an increasing demand for workers, attracting more people to the surrounding area and increasing the need for individuals to commute.

The Central Tri-City area of Grand Island, Hastings and Kearney will continue to grow because of the proximity to Interstate 80.

Program Successes

*Leadership Plenty* – is a multi session leadership program that helps emerging leaders identify community opportunities and improvement projects. Four communities in southeast Nebraska are participating.

*Strategic Planning* – Extension educators often assist communities with asset mapping, community visioning and strategic planning.

*Urban Neighborhood* – Educators work with urban neighborhoods in Omaha on leadership development, public policy and coalitions building.

*E-Commerce and E-Gov* programs have been delivered to a number of communities. The Bit-Mobile has been in several communities providing a mobile computer lab to aid in instruction.

Future Target Outcomes

Community members will be able to identify resources, improve decision/policy making and collaborate with other communities to carry out projects related to community and economic development in their region.

Entrepreneurs, small businesses and local governments will embrace change, use new business skills and IT applications to diversify and increase business revenues providing more job opportunities and increased community vitality.

Community leaders will improve capacity for policy making. Issues will be clarified, researched and analyzed, with alternative solutions formulated and prioritized.

Youth will participate in issue identification, community projects and entrepreneur opportunities and will be empowered to remain/return to Nebraska communities.
Current and Emerging Issues

Southeast District has 52 impaired stream segments and 45 impaired lakes/impounded water bodies as designated by NDEQ.

Recreational use of lakes, streams and rivers has increased over time with the rise in population near the Metro areas.

Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) standards for different pollutants will be established for several water bodies in the next few years.

Increasing density of acreage developments, especially near the Metro areas, generates a need for education focusing on environmental protection.

Community green spaces are shown to increase property values, reduce crime, reduce utility costs and contribute to economic viability of communities.

Program Successes

Onsite Wastewater training has been developed and taught resulting in 733 professional certification training contacts including pumpers, installers and inspectors.

Drinking Water programs including training for well drillers and private well owners addressed issues of arsenic and uranium.

ProHort Educators train workers in lawn and garden centers on sustainable and safe practices.

Almost 700 volunteers were trained in the Master Gardener program providing 30,699 hours of volunteer service.

Termite Workshops Developed hands on training for professional pest management applicators in termite control.

Erosion and Sediment Control Seminar 220 professional engineers, contractors, developers and agency personnel attended with 91% indication they would apply knowledge to reduce soil loss from construction sites.

IPM in Schools Educators work with schools on least toxic applications to manage pests.

Future Target Outcomes

Homeowners will live in a non-toxic environment. School facilities will provide youth with a safe learning environment.

Sustainable and properly managed landscapes will increase property values, save energy and reduce risks to the environment.

Well drillers, wastewater management professionals and homeowners will implement water quality testing, proper water treatment, well head protection and proper inspection and replacement of waste handling systems.

Watershed councils will promote and implement reduced erosion and best management practices.

Commercial horticulture professionals and homeowners will increase their use of sustainable landscape management techniques and reduced water usage.

Pest control professionals and building managers will use effective, low toxic pest management creating safer environments for children and families.
Current and Emerging Issues

Agriculture producers are facing changing market demands and changing governmental role in agriculture.

The average age of producers is 54 years and transitioning of the operation in the next five to ten years will be an increasingly important issue.

Sizable land value increases (13\%) and a robust market for land in southeast Nebraska is impacting future profitability.

There is an opportunity ahead for diversified agriculture products to improve the profitability and sustainability of operations while expanding local markets and strengthening local economies.

Irrigated crop production is critical to the economy but water quality and quantity issues make irrigation efficiency very important.

Biofuels will impact cropping system practices, water usage and the use of byproducts in the coming years.

Identification of livestock premises, animal identification and bio-security are critical issues facing producers.

Zoning to allow for urban expansion and livestock production and environmental issues and regulations surrounding livestock production also demand attention.

Program Successes

Ten Easy Ways to Boost Profits $20/Acre – 372 farmers and consultants attended workshops. Follow-up surveys indicated that farmers who tried the promoted practices valued them up to $49.79/acre for a minimum impact of over $941,000 for survey respondents alone.

Farmer Rancher College, Since 2002 over 200 producers annually valued the program an average of $9.58/acre for a potential average impact of $3.6 million annually.

Crop Management and Diagnostic Clinics Soybean Management Field Days Since 2001 almost 2,400 producers and crop consultants representing over 500,000 acres annually value this program at $9.23/acre for a potential average impact of almost $5 million annually.

On Farm Research – the average annual whole farm profitability attributed to the farmer research is $2,370 for planting research, $3,643 for tillage research, $5,188 for research on soil fertility and $3,181 for research on pest management. Visit UNL Extension’s On Farm Research Web site at http://farmresearch.unl.edu

Winning the Game/Marketing Stored Grain Since 2003 over 40 workshops for 1,000 people indicated they would increase forward contracting of grain by 20%.

Carbon Credit Program educational meetings helped producers add $397,700 to their farm income this past fiscal year.
Kimmel Research and Education Center is focused on developing value-added products and markets. The facility in partnership with the Kimmel Foundation provides both outdoor and indoor learning environments.

Conservation Security Partnership (CSP) educational programs resulted in nearly 11 million dollars awarded to producers over the next 5-10 years.

Rural Advantage Conference participants learn about sustainable agriculture practices, agrotourism, direct marketing and niche marketing at this annual conference.

Future Target Outcomes

Water and Natural Resources

Producers will adopt irrigation scheduling technologies that will reduce pumping by at least 1” per acre, pumping 70 billion gallons less water. Farmer management of nitrogen and water will help continue the downward trend of nitrate concentration in groundwater.

Farmers will increase adoption of no-till on irrigated acres reducing early season water stress and surface crusting, eliminating one irrigation pass.

Production Practices and Risk Management

As a result of participation in on-farm research, field days and workshops, producers will improve their production practices to minimize their costs of production, eliminating expenses that have marginal return and maximizing environmental stewardship.

Agribusiness industry professionals will assist producers in increased adoption of practices that contribute to profitability and protect the environment as a result of attending the Crop Management and Diagnostic Clinics, Crop Management Winter program, Soybean Management Field Days, Solution Days and Nebraska No-till Conference.

Producers will assess their current financial situation, calculating cash flow needs and break-even target prices as a result of developing and adopting a marketing plan.

Producers will assess their level of risk using production, price, legal and human resources risk tools to develop and implement a risk management plan including a plan for farm transition.

Producers will make informed decisions regarding components/options of the 2007 Farm Bill and contact policy makers to provide input.

Diversified Agriculture

Producers will increase the diversity of their enterprises including specialty or high value crops and will develop new market potential and reduce risk to improve profitability and sustainability.

More small farm and acreage owners will experiment with diversified agriculture enterprises and successfully direct market or niche market their products.

Livestock

All livestock premises and animals will be identified and managed in a bio-secure manner.

Livestock operations will be sustainable and allowed to grow in agricultural friendly communities.

Livestock producers will use environmentally friendly management practices.

Consumers will have a better understanding of production practices and a safe food supply.
Current and Emerging Issues

Seventy percent of the state’s population is in the Southeast District. In 2004, the District had both 71% of the marriages and 71% of the divorces for the state of Nebraska, with more than half of the divorces involving children. Those who divorce lose, on average, three-fourths of their personal net worth.

There were nearly 84,000 children under the age of five in the Southeast District at the 2000 census; statewide, 70% of their mothers were in the workforce as compared to 59% nationally. Over 6,000 of the District’s grandparents are responsible for raising their grandchildren.

Future Target Outcomes

Individuals and families successful in marriage and relationships will strengthen community vitality and future generations.

Individuals who are cared for by others will have a positive, safe, supportive environment for growth and development.

Communities will improve community support for child care, self-care, disability and elder care programs.

Families and individuals will decrease indebtedness and provide a safe and secure future for children and contribute to community viability.

Families will increase savings and build wealth.

Families and individuals will maintain a sustainable financial lifestyle.

Aging Nebraskans will have financial resources throughout their lifespan.

Program Successes

*Family Strengths* is a program based on research of Dr. John DeFrain. The Family Strengths Inventory and the Family Strengths book and educational programs are being used in family nights and educational programs to help families identify and build on their strengths.

*Parents Forever and Kids Talk about Divorce* were established in response to state legislation allowing judges to mandate parent education prior to the divorce decree.

The *Guardianship Program* is a partnership with the Nebraska Supreme Court and the State Bar Association that is now court mandated. Nearly 300 have participated in southeast Nebraska since the program started in 2004.

*Methamphetamine Awareness* education has been delivered to 3000 people throughout the District in partnership with the Third District Congressional Office and law enforcement.

*Preventing Credit Card Blues at 22* has reached more than 2500 high school students helping them identify factors to consider when managing a credit card.

*Medicare Education* programs reached hundreds of individuals with an average savings of $1,100 per person for an economic impact to families and communities of southeast Nebraska.
Current and Emerging Issues

Obesity is increasing at epidemic levels. Sixty-one percent of adults in Nebraska were overweight or obese in 2003.

One-third of Nebraska’s youth in grades K-12 are at risk for becoming overweight or were overweight during the 2002/2003 school year.

Only 13% of Nebraska youth eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day, compared to 20% nationally.

Seven out of ten Americans who die each year die of a chronic disease -- an extension of what people do or not do relative to healthy living.

Food borne illnesses impact thousands of Nebraskans each year and cost millions of dollars in health care and lost business income.

Program Successes

*ABC’s of Good Health* is taught by nine educators in southeast Nebraska. Statewide over 1,100 women have attended, with 72% reporting they have reached goals for improved nutrition and exercise.

*Youth in Motion* and *Fast Foods 4-H* programs teach youth about healthy eating and exercise.

*Walk Nebraska* is a virtual walk across the state which encourages people to walk and record mileage.

*MyPyramid Food Guidance* web based educational materials have reached thousands of professionals nationwide who teach nutrition.

*Nutrition Education Program* provided education to 8,990 youth ages 3-18 and 800 adults age 60 and older in 2004-2005.

ServSafe training is provided in English and Spanish for over 2500 food service workers in Nebraska annually.

Future Target Outcomes

Children will exhibit healthy weights.

Social and economic costs of high risk behaviors will be reduced.

Incidents of chronic conditions related to poor diet, lack of physical activity and risky behaviors will be decreased resulting in decreased medical expenditures, and social and economic costs of high risk behaviors will be reduced.

Children will adopt healthy eating and exercise habits, and will exhibit healthy weights, decreasing the social and economic costs of excess weight and eating disorders.

All food handlers (consumers, food processors and livestock producers) will implement safe food handling practices for the reduction of food borne illnesses. This will eliminate economic costs by avoiding business shutdowns, and avoid the social costs that result from
Current and Emerging Issues

The Millennial generation likes teamwork and parental involvement. They are the busiest generation and are accustomed to tight schedules, leaving little time for unstructured free time. They experience more daily interactions with other ethnic groups and cultures than ever before.

The Millennials have witnessed terrorism, heroism and patriotism in conjunction with the Murrah federal building bombing, Columbine High School and the attack of September 11, 2001.

Volunteers for all service organizations are in short supply.

Volunteers are busy, many working full time. They want their experiences to be meaningful and personally rewarding.

Future Target Outcomes

Trained volunteers will be leading a growing volunteer driven Nebraska 4-H program.

Youth and adult volunteers will feel more valued and important members of the 4-H program through recognition in five areas: participation, progress towards personal goals, standards of excellence, peer competition and cooperation.

Youth will have more fun in group activities and report increased knowledge through teamwork.

Youth will practice effective problem-solving and decision-making, accept community and social responsibility, demonstrate leadership and positive relationship skills.

Youth will gain advanced science skills and knowledge about science related careers which will assist them in making academic choices and developing a love of life long learning.

Program Successes

Southeast Nebraska has over 13,000 youth members in organized community clubs, over 44,000 in school enrichment programs and over 600 youth in after school programs.

Southeast Nebraska has over 10,000 volunteers working with the youth program.

Extension staff held 880 workshops, judging clinics and educational programs in 2006 directly teaching 2,649 hours and reaching over 46,800 youth and adults.

As a result of 4-H youth development programs youth feel connected to others. Their self confidence and decision making skills are increased. They feel their lives have meaning and purpose. These feelings and skills will result in lower juvenile risk behaviors and stronger ties to the community.