2015

2015 Extension Highlights

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2015 Extension Highlights

Here’s a look at some of Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County’s 2015 impacts.

Extension Educator Tyler Williams (pictured at right) helped organize UNL Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources’ exhibit at Husker Harvest Days which focused on “Successfully Weathering Extremes.” This year, he was the principal investigator or collaborator for four accepted agriculture-related grants totaling nearly $258,000. Two of the grant projects will focus on climate education and communication efforts for agriculture over the next year.

The Nutrition Education Program (NEP) helps limited-resource families learn to prepare nutritious and safe foods while stretching their food dollars. Last year, NEP staff completed lessons with 426 enrolled adults (2,217 teaching contacts) and reached 7,692 youth (11,183 teaching contacts). This year marked the 15-year-milestone of Lincoln Public Schools using nutrition kits developed by NEP staff to enhance LPS nutrition curriculum objectives. To date, teachers using the kits have spent 33,498 hours teaching 74,691 students in 3,800 classrooms. Pictured is Extension Assistant Cally Blake leading Everett 1st graders in a healthy snack activity.

In 2015, Extension Educator Sarah Browning, Associate Mary Jane Frogge and Master Gardeners assisted residents and green industry professionals through over 12,000 contacts (phone calls, walk-in requests, email questions, site visits, program participants and listservs) and 116 hours of horticulture-related programming. For example, Master Gardener volunteers helped maintain the People’s City Mission community garden, teaching residents how to care for and harvest garden crops.

Extension has extensive resources to help identify pests and recommends low-toxic control methods whenever possible. Extension Associate Soni Cochran assists thousands of area residents via phone calls, walk-in requests, email questions, publications, presentations, workshops and as a monthly guest on “Problems & Solutions,” hosted by Cathy Blythe on KFOR radio. The pest and wildlife website received 1.6 million unique page views in 2015.

Extension Educator Alice Henneman teaches people how to make healthy food choices and safely prepare food. In November, she presented a free class, “Make-Ahead Freezer Meals” (pictured above) at Bryan Health which was attended by over 300 people. Alice coordinates and contributes to Extension’s http://food.unl.edu statewide website which received over 2.6 million page views last year.

Nebraska Extension offers “Co-Parenting for Successful Kids” on-site and online classes to help separating and divorcing parents – the classes meet court-mandated requirements. Last year, 101 parents completed the classes offered in Lincoln and 330 Lancaster County parents took the class online. Pictured is Extension Educator Maureen Burson interacting with parents online.

Extension has presented a Fair Fun Day at the Lancaster County Fair since 1996. Child care groups with youth in grades K-4 are led on hands-on tours by teen volunteers. Extension Educator Lorene Bartos (pictured standing at right) has organized it for many years. This year, 293 youth from 12 child care groups took tours, learning about fair activities and agriculture. To date, nearly 5,000 youth have participated.

The 20th annual 4-H Clover College, held June 16–19, featured 55 hands-on workshops attended by 180 youth with a total 888 class registrations. More than 70 adult and teen volunteers taught or helped with the workshops. Pictured is Extension Associate Marty Cruckshank assisting with the Clover Kids Day Camp.
2015 has been a year of change in the Nebraska Extension in Lancaster County office. In February, I began my role as Unit Leader and County Department Head. I quickly realized the depth of staff talent and dedication, and the impact they make in our community. We celebrated with retiring staff and said goodbye to a combined 90 years of Extension experience.

Growth occurred as Nebraska Extension administration identified areas of focus. These areas will enable staff to more quickly and effectively help Nebraskans use research-based information to make informed decisions:

- 4-H Youth Development
- Beef Systems
- Community Environment
- Community Vitality Initiative
- Cropping and Water Systems
- Food, Nutrition & Health
- The Learning Child

Extension administration also announced the formation of issue-based programming. This new structuring brings current and emerging issues to inter-disciplinary teams ready to ensure communities, businesses and people continue to thrive.

In March, our office collaborated with the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Planning Department, Board of Commissioners and the Citizens' Institute on Rural Design to host "My Town Lancaster County." As part of this three-day workshop, leaders from area towns spent a day at the Lancaster Extension Education Center for learning and sharing ideas. Extension Educators facilitated a session in which groups brainstormed improvement plans. The workshop culminated with a showcase of the town's planned projects. What an amazing event!

We upgraded the audio-visual system and furnishings in our conference facilities, which are used by Extension and non-profit organizations. In 2015, approximately 4,700 hours of workshops and meetings were held.

We look forward to 2016 as we welcome new staff and continue to serve Nebraskans!

Karen Wobig
UNL Extension Educator & Unit Leader