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## University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Connect, March 2001

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# CONNECT

## EDGE HELPS ENTREPRENEURS EXPLORE COSTS, CONSIDERATIONS OF A NEW OR EXPANDING BUSINESS

Entrepreneurs thinking of starting or expanding a business can use an edge.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension supplies one.

The EDGE – Enhancing, Developing and Growing Entrepreneurs – program offers skill-based training for people who want to start or expand a business, or improve their business skills.

It helps potential entrepreneurs realize what needs to happen before they spend a penny, and that's a wise investment, said Marilyn Schlake, EDGE coordinator.

Hyannis businessman Cliff Dailey, owner of Cow Country Sales and Service, a tire and trailer business in Nebraska's Sandhills, agrees.

"EDGE is tremendous in networking, and in getting our numbers to where we can analyze them better and easier, rather than through trial and error," Dailey said. "It really opened our eyes to a lot of things.

We urge any small business to take (the EDGE course), even if they've been established for a while."

The 40-hour, 11-week EDGE course is taught by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs. Participants learn about legal structures, market strategies, financial statements, bookkeeping, cash flow projections, financing and managing growth.

Schlake said EDGE participants have developed successful bed and breakfasts, direct beef sales, medical services, restaurants, auto and muffler repair shops, high technology services, web development and massage therapy services, to name a few.

"There's a lot of business ideas people have," Schlake said. Getting those ideas – and the figures to make them happen – down on paper is important.

"Let's test it with paper and pencil and make a wise decision from there," Schlake said. "Not everyone who has a business idea gets it off the ground – nor should they."

Dailey started his Cow Country Sales and Service in fall 1997 and participated in EDGE the following spring. He said the program gave him a whole new outlook on managing growth and was well worth the homework and weekly 110-mile drive to North Platte.

In total, 890 existing and potential business owners have participated in the EDGE program since 1993, Schlake said, most in rural communities. Of these, approximately 50 percent have started or



*Marilyn Schlake, EDGE program coordinator, shows an instructor's manual used to help entrepreneurs who seek to make sound business decisions before investing, and to sharpen their business skills. Since 1993, 890 people have participated in this NU Cooperative Extension program.*

expanded their business operations, including hiring more than 450 new employees.

EDGE continues in 2001, with an added emphasis on value-added agricultural ideas. Extension works with community sponsors and course instructors to provide the EDGE program.

Schlake can be contacted at (402)472-4138.

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## Dean's comments

Welcome to the first issue of *University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Connect* – *Connect* for short. This newsletter contains a variety of stories illustrating the broad and diverse work NU Cooperative Extension does in Nebraska.

We are proud of this knowledge-based work. We believe it matters – helping prevent food-borne illness, providing producers with alternatives to help increase profitability, aiding communities in meeting their needs – the list goes on. You'll find stories on these and other topics in this issue. They're only examples of what we do in extension's priority areas of agricultural profitability and sustainability; children, youth and families; food safety and quality; health and wellness; and strengthening Nebraska communities.

We've chosen the newsletter name *Connect* because that's what NU Cooperative Extension does. We connect the resources of the university with the state. We connect the state with the university. We connect people seeking answers to community concerns with each other and resources that can help them.

In extension we provide research-based education and information people can use to meet the challenges and opportunities of their lives. We teach in our areas of expertise, we facilitate, we collaborate. We bring in cooperating experts to help those we work with, and we teach other information and educa-

tion providers who then extend the education they receive to others.

Like the entire NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, of which extension is a part, we are partners with Nebraska.



*Elbert Dickey*

We like to say in extension that we are part of, and partners with, our communities. Sometimes we're woven into the fabric of those communities and the state so well, and our work is such a part of daily life, that people may not always be aware extension is involved – they're just glad someone

is there with what they need.

Cooperative Extension of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not the Cooperative Extension your parents or grandparents knew. Cooperative Extension continually evolves to meet the ever-changing issues important to those with whom we work. Our program content changes as research increases the knowledge base extension draws on. While we maintain close ties with our traditional audiences to meet their needs, we also expand our programming to meet the needs of new audiences. This is in the best land-grant tradition of taking the resources of the university to the state.

I hope you'll enjoy reading about our work in these newsletter pages. We're busy putting knowledge to work – for you.

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

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension

# CONNECT

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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.

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### 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.

## Many work together to turn ideas into web site reality

One good idea often builds on another.

One hundred and forty Seward County businesses have a place in the international business arena and a portal to e-commerce because of strong collaboration and good ideas with roots in University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Master Navigator program.

Dennis Kahl, NU extension educator in Seward County, is one of several Master Navigator instructors statewide. The six-week Internet program builds on local capabilities in rural Nebraska communities.

Master Navigator participants agree in advance to teach others technology skills or to engage in Internet-related activities, such as building web pages to benefit their communities.

The class helps people grasp the technology, Kahl said. Participants explore what's available, and how sites can be used to promote, trade and do business.

"They have a clearer picture of how

that technology might eventually be used in their place of work," Kahl said. "These people all realize that whether they like the technology or not, it's here and if they don't use it they will lose customers."

Transactions, databases, suppliers and more are available online. Punching a button and instantly sending an order has replaced phone calls for many businesses, Kahl said.

As a Master Navigator instructor, Kahl had long believed there must be ways to involve local students to help local businesses. When Master Navigator participants and others visited in a fall 1998 Connect Seward Technology meeting, ideas began clicking.

One hundred hours later, Seward High School business and computing seniors had interviewed the county's business people and posted business information and photos to the World Wide Web. The site is <http://connectseward.org/>.

The process benefited students



Brett Hampton

(From left) Don Hain, Craig Williams, Dennis Kahl and Pat Coldiron are among the collaborators who helped launch or maintain a Seward community website.

because they learned interview and technology skills, said Craig Williams, Seward Public Schools' technology coordinator.

"We teach web publishing anyway, but this gave us a direct link back to the communications," Williams said. "The communications part was pretty important."

The project also benefited Seward businesses, said Pat Coldiron, Chamber of Commerce director and former Master Navigator participant.

Project benefits are "huge," Coldiron said. "I know of direct contact from people from other states because of our location on the web."

Master Navigator "gave us the impetus and courage" to move forward, said Coldiron, whose office eventually will maintain the site currently maintained by former Master Navigator participant Don Hain of Jones National Bank, Seward.

Since 1999 approximately 500 people have taken the Nebraska Master Navigator course. One 78-year-old who before hadn't touched a computer went on to teach web stock marketing, Kahl said.

Participants can follow Master Navigator with Electronic Main Street, which teaches more specifics on marketing and promoting electronic businesses. Both programs are scheduled statewide in spring 2001.

Kahl can be contacted at (402) 643-2981.

## Nutrition education part of Omaha farmers market

Peppers, onions, collard and mustard greens are among the colorful vegetables at a new north Omaha farmers market.

Typically the neighborhood's African American, Latino and Native American residents haven't had easy access or transportation to acquire quality, fresh-grown produce, said Erika Tonsfeldt, University of Nebraska extension assistant in Douglas/Sarpy counties.

The market, begun in summer 2000 with aid from a USDA grant, helps change that.

Surveys show on average area residents eat one fresh fruit or vegetable per day, Tonsfeldt said, compared to the five recommended by the American Cancer Society.

The market brings fresh fruit and vegetable vendors, nutrition education,

cultural food samples and crafts to the neighborhood. Extension is one of the market's collaborators, said Tonsfeldt, who provides nutrition information and samples of healthy, flavorful ways to prepare favorite cultural foods.

Tonsfeldt said resident taste tests gave a thumb's up to her greens prepared with one pat of butter and seasonings. Typically greens are prepared with high-cholesterol fatback and ham hocks.

Tonsfeldt said the market received nothing but positive publicity, and also drew people from outside north Omaha.

Six markets, each attended by about 200 people, were held last year. A dozen markets with six to eight vendors are scheduled for 2001 and 2002.

Tonsfeldt can be contacted at (402) 444-6668.

## Strong family traits listed on 240,000 grocery bags

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's message about strong families is on the bag—or, more correctly, 240,000 grocery bags printed by Affiliated Foods.

Last fall Affiliated Foods Co-op Inc. of Norfolk, working with Cooperative Extension, printed grocery sacks encouraging families to eat together and listing six traits of strong families. The idea came from Debra Schroeder, NU extension educator in Cuming County, and several of her regional colleagues.

It was one of a number of ideas implemented across Nebraska to increase awareness of the importance of strong families. A yearlong strong families emphasis kicked off during NU for Families month in November, when extension offices in 34 Nebraska counties coordinated activities that ranged from family activity nights to parent education. Theme of the month was "Eat with Your Family."

Schroeder said strong, healthy families share and communicate, and mealtime is a good time for that. She noted there's a natural tie between the grocery store and families eating together.

"As Mom goes to the grocery store at 5 p.m., it's a subtle reminder of sitting down with the family for that meal. For as long as the sack lasts, there's this message, reminding families of the six traits," she said.

Six strong family traits NU research identifies show strong families are appreciative and affectionate, committed, communicate positively, enjoy time together, experience spiritual well-being, and successfully manage stress and crisis.

The grocery sacks, with Affiliated Foods and NU Cooperative Extension identification and the strong families message, were distributed in 10 Midwest-ern states.

Schroeder can be contacted at (402) 372-6006.

## Grazing management education provides participants with

Jim Choquette of Upland understands his cows more as time goes on. The better he understands them, the more content they seem. Contented cows increase profit chances because they undergo less stress and show better weight gains.

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's grazing management education made a difference for him, Choquette said, as it has for other family farm-sized Nebraska agricultural producers.

Grazing workshops, retreats, tours, on-farm visits and periodic newsletters provide producers a forum to explore different ways to profitability, said Bob Scriven, NU extension educator in Buffalo County and a workshop coordinator.

Scriven sees that exploration as a challenge—and necessity—because of today's high input costs and low commodity prices.

"If producers want to maintain a family farm and that quality of life, then they have to find a way to make it profitable," said Scriven, who knows even considering change can be difficult for people. "If something isn't working or isn't profitable, then doing more of the

same or doing it harder won't help."

Scriven and Terry Gompert, NU extension educator in Knox County, challenge grazing management participants to find what they can do better and less expensively than what is commonly done. They teach practical principles of a forage-based livestock grazing system and provide a positive environment for philosophical questions that dare participants to think in new ways.

"You take advantage of the other things people aren't doing and realize it's OK to do that... and move ahead," Gompert said. Not everyone should incorporate every suggestion, he added, but even a few changes can make a difference.

Considering grass as a primary income generator is one way to think differently, especially when marketed through livestock. With proper management, grass can create significant income, Gompert said.

Take Choquette. Two years ago, he was a row-crop producer.

"I never felt I had the knowledge or tools to make it just with the cattle,"

Choquette said. "Now I feel I have the tools to be a grass farmer. Extension people have changed my life."

Knowledge gained from extension helps Choquette manage the extra effort required to run 62 yearlings on



After participating in NU Cooperative Extension's grazing management education, Jim Choquette of Upland has been able to focus on his beef cow herd over row-crop farming. Extension's grazing programs help producers explore different ways to profitability, such as rotational and irrigated grazing.

## practical principles they can apply

Choquette learned to extend his grazing season with triticale and turnips, and to easily move his cattle every three days. He learned in-pasture weaning is better for both cows and calves because they still see each other and are happier. He learned cattle feel safer and more content in a confined area.

“Wild cows no longer exist,” said Choquette. “Your herd becomes your friend.”

Extension’s grazing education goes beyond beef cow-calf operations to dairy cows, finishing cattle, sheep, goats and buffalo. Last year, about 250 people attended grazing workshops. Over the last six years, another 250 participated in overnight grazing retreats. Scriven and Gompert estimate about 80 percent of retreat participants made changes.

Bruce Anderson, NU forage specialist and grazing management team member, said a 1996 team survey of program participants and nonparticipants showed twice the change in grazing practices among participants that saved \$3 million annually in feed and grazing costs.

“Many participants repeat or attend many different kinds of these programs,” Anderson said, noting multiple contacts often are important as people consider making changes.

Gompert said participants have positive attitudes, personal goals, concern for quality of life and the environment, and a desire to be profitable.

Often, he said, they just need a little nudge that says it’s OK for them to do things differently than most other people.

They need to see it’s legitimate to “do this strange thing, because even if it makes money, we’ve got to be accepted by our peers,” Gompert said.

Scriven can be contacted at (308) 236-1235, Gompert at (402) 288-4224, Anderson at (402) 472-6237.



Cindy and Kelly Bruns, Bloomfield, stand in their New Zealand-style milking parlor with Terry Gompert (right), NU Cooperative Extension educator in Knox County. The dairy is seasonal, with cows bred and managed to be milked until it gets too cold.

## Producers find alternatives helpful in expanding dairy herd

When Kelly and Cindy Bruns of Bloomfield wanted to expand their Jersey dairy herd, they didn’t relish a \$1,200 per cow investment in a bigger conventional milking barn and machinery.

Working with Terry Gompert, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educator in Knox County, the Bruns found an alternative – a cow-friendly, low-cost New Zealand-style milking parlor and specialized grazing management.

They built their new milking parlor in the middle of their 160-acre pasture. Cows walk a maximum one-fourth mile to be milked. The barn’s simple style moves cows through quickly because there are no steps and 10 cows can be milked at one time.

In their conventional barn, milking 70 cows took the Bruns 2.5 hours. They’ve milked their 87 first-calf heifers in the new milking parlor in a record 50 minutes.

“We knew it would work,” Kelly Bruns said.

The new dairy is seasonal; cows are bred and managed to be milked until it gets too cold, from about April until November. Kelly Bruns said they hope to sell their milk as organic, once they find a market.

Gompert and other extension personnel explore ways managed grazing can work with various livestock and situations. There are opportunities for people to succeed without spending much money, Gompert said, if they explore new ways to do things, take control of their lives and take greater advantage of what’s available to them.

Besides finding their lower-cost, cow-friendly functional dairy parlor alternative to a more expensive conventional milking barn, the Bruns said their planning, work and management have helped them realize another goal: Cindy has quit her town job to stay home with their children and help with the dairy.

KON CLEVELAND

# ServSafe workshop offers food service managers facts on preventing food-borne illness

With nearly half of all meals in the United States eaten away from home, it's important food-service handlers know the facts about preventing food-borne illness, said Julie Albrecht, University of Nebraska food safety specialist.

Food-borne illness effects can range from "mild stomach discomfort or what people may term the flu all the way to death," Albrecht said, so prevention is vital.

ServSafe provides prevention facts.

NU Cooperative Extension cooperates with the Nebraska Restaurant Association to teach ServSafe, the industry standard in food safety training. It's an inexpensive, 16-hour safe food handling workshop for restaurants, schools, hospitals, institutions and catering services, Albrecht said.

"All establishments are selling safe food," Albrecht said, "otherwise they wouldn't be in business. The course provides managers with more information to understand why the food regulations are what they are. They go back with a greater understanding of what they're required to do."

Beginning in 1994, Albrecht taught teams of 24 extension educators with food safety/pest management expertise to train restaurant managers. She said an estimated 6,000 managers have taken ServSafe training since it began in Nebraska, adding each takes the information back to an average of 15 other employees.

ServSafe emphasizes proper cooking temperatures, cooling techniques and effective hand washing – three major causes of food-borne illness – as well as current sanitation procedures, proper thawing and more.

Steve Boyer, a certified ServSafe trainer, is vice president of human resources for Wild West Inc., which does business as Whiskey Creek Steakhouses. Boyer took ServSafe training from Cooperative Extension in Hall County in late 1999.

"We can't say enough about the program," Boyer said, adding it has all the

pertinent information to help restaurants operate safely. The training "opened the eyes of a lot of our managers."

For example, the restaurant logs food temperatures every two hours to ensure food safety, and stresses ways to avoid cross-contamination, especially for line cooks wearing gloves, Boyer said. He added he believes food safety training is so important it should be mandatory.

Carol Schwarz, NU extension educator in Buffalo County and a ServSafe instructor, said ServSafe helps managers focus on illness-causing bacteria and how they are transmitted.

Proper time and temperature required for safe food heating and cooling are easy to regulate if people understand why they're necessary, Schwarz said, adding, "we can't control some things, but these

we can control."

To help people better understand food temperature management, Schwarz chills a large kettle of thickened water, similar in consistency to cream-based soup, in different ways. She said workshop participants are surprised at how long it takes the "soup" to chill, even using walk-in coolers.

Although it seems some managers initially would rather not take the time to attend ServSafe, "by the time we're done, they'll say 'we're glad we came,'" Schwarz said.

Albrecht can be contacted at (402)472-8884, Schwarz at (308)236-1235.



*NU Cooperative Extension Food Safety Specialist Julie Albrecht demonstrates proper heating and cooling temperatures using thickened water. This technique is used in ServSafe, the industry standard in food safety training for restaurant managers.*



Brett Hampton

## Two ServSafe spinoffs provide additional training

Two ServSafe spinoff programs are coordinated by University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension staff.

PrepSafe trains preparation cooks, head cooks and short-order cooks. WaitSafe trains host staff, wait staff and bussing staff.

In fall 2000 Nancy Urbanec, extension assistant in Douglas/Sarpy counties, taught the two courses to more than 100 people representing full-service steakhouses to take-out pizza parlors. Hygiene and sanitation are emphasized, she said.

"There's a difference between sanitation and just cleaning something," Urbanec said. Cleaning removes visible soil; sanitation reduces microorganisms to a safe level. Restaurants always have some microorganisms, as homes do, Urbanec explained, because unlike medical settings, they can't be sterile.

Urbanec teaches a number of sanitary tips. One example: Avoid picking glasses up by the rim, so germs don't pass from staff to customers that way, or from customers to staff.

Because of its health codes, the city of Lincoln, mandated through the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department, is the only city to require ServSafe, PrepSafe and WaitSafe training, Urbanec said, but all three workshops are strongly encouraged throughout Nebraska as helpful insurance in avoiding problems.

"You pay for insurance because you hope you'll never need it," Urbanec said. "If you do have an outbreak but in good faith have been training employees ... you're less likely to have as many problems."

Urbanec can be contacted at (402)444-7804.

## Now – "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?"

Little things count, too.

Ask family members who have divided up family mementos – Mom's glass salad bowl, Uncle Henry's watermelon hoe, Aunt Dot's favorite scarf pin.

Some attorneys say dividing non-titled property creates more emotion and conflict than dividing financial assets, said Cheryl Tickner, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension educator in Howard County. Tickner is a coordinator for "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?," a workshop that helps people plan their intergenerational transfer of personal property.

"It's the small mementos that are sometimes overlooked which can cause the most conflict ... those are the ones with a lot of memories attached," Tickner said.

During the workshop the coordinator and participants discuss perceptions about what's fair, and options to help reduce misunderstandings and strengthen relationships.

How things are divided is just as important as who gets what, and may affect



Kayla Hinrichs

*Cheryl Tickner, NU Cooperative Extension educator in Howard County, uses her grandmother's sewing basket as an example of non-titled property with personal meaning during workshops.*

family relationships for years to come, Tickner said. For example, an in-law may provide more care to an elderly relative than a son or daughter, yet may be excluded when it's time to distribute the relative's belongings.

In 2000 Tickner led six workshops, attended by more than 60 people. Workshop size is kept small to allow people time to talk and ask questions. More workshops are scheduled in 2001.

Tickner can be contacted at (308)754-5422.

## Students put Germbusters lessons to work in life

Fifth- and sixth-grade students at one Lincoln County school translated lessons learned in Germbusters, a University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension 4-H School Enrichment program on hand-washing, into a practical lunchroom suggestion.

They saw lunchroom forks being stored tine ends up and realized the forks were a target for germs on any unclean hands that might touch them.

Today those forks are stored tine ends down, said Cathy Weaver, extension assistant in Lincoln County and Germbusters program coordinator.

Weaver has children pass paper containing powder that glows under blacklight to illustrate the number one way to avoid communicable illnesses is to have clean, germ-free hands. Children see how easily the powder gets on their hands and realize how easily germs spread. Then through an activity using a fluorescent orange lotion, the students are shown how

difficult germs can be to wash off, Weaver said.

Proper hand washing requires soap, warm running water and rubbing hands vigorously for 25 seconds – long enough to say the ABCs. The combination of friction and heat helps break down the dirt and oils that contain germs, Weaver said. She teaches children to be especially conscious of commonly missed areas – backs of hands, wrists, under nails and rings. She also teaches them how to dry their hands with a paper towel and shut the water faucet off with the paper towel.

Weaver teaches Germbusters to more than 2,000 Lincoln County elementary school children annually. She said the proper hand washing lesson was so well taken that one school added warm water to restroom sinks after Germbusters education.

Weaver can be contacted at (308)532-2683.



# Program provides beginning farmers and ranchers with information to help make decisions

Beginning farmers and ranchers today face major expense obstacles unless they have a farming/ranching relative working with them, or other financial backing. Sometimes, if financing is available, they may not know how or where to find it.

That creates a dilemma, because as Nebraska producers are getting older and planning to retire, few younger producers can afford to take their places.

Dave Goeller, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension's Beginning Farmer Program coordinator, helps.

Goeller provides potential producers with cash flow and financing information. Figuring through projected expenses and receipts "puts the pencil in their hand" to help people decide if farming or ranching is right for them, Goeller said.

Jim Weber, 30, Burwell, always wanted to farm or ranch for himself. Until last year, he worked for someone else. Then came the opportunity to rent his own ground and buy 120 beef cows.

With Goeller's assistance, Weber completed paperwork to obtain financing from the federal Farm Service Agency and began realizing his dream.

"He knew how they wanted things," Weber said. "Without talking to Dave and

discussing some of the options available, it wouldn't have been as easy.

"I think it's a good program and really there's no other way for a young guy to get started on his own," Weber said, adding he has since recommended extension's Beginning Farmer Program to others.

Not everyone he works with ends up on the farm or ranch, Goeller said, adding it's better people explore realities before investments are made.

"I'm helping them see the reality," Goeller said. "Sometimes they don't like the answer, but they're their answers, their numbers."

Goeller also works with producers carrying financial burdens and retiring producers doing pre-estate planning. In his first year he worked with about 200 families, nearly half of whom were trying to get started.

As of 1997, Nebraska had about 5,500 producers under age 35 and nearly 12,400 over age 65, Goeller said.

Goeller can be contacted at (402)472-0661.



*Dave Goeller, NU Cooperative Extension's Beginning Farmer Program coordinator, provides financing information and helps potential producers project cash flow before investing in the high costs of agricultural production. He also works with producers planning retirement and those carrying financial burdens.*



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