Tightening Your Financial Belt in Tough Times

Lorene Bartos
UNL Extension Educator

Tightening your financial belt in tough times can be a challenge to everyone. As we start the new year and make resolutions, how can we cut back and still have a comfortable standard of living?

Reducing spending whether the situation is temporary or extended, one needs to get the most for their money. Studies have found many families do not adjust their lifestyle for about six months after their income is reduced — that time period can bring disaster. It is important to make adjustments immediately if your financial situation changes.

Whether streamlining a budget or simply making small habitual changes to save money, the first step is recognizing unnecessary expenditures. Make a list of wants and needs. “Needs” are the things we need to survive. “Wants” are the nice things in life we can survive without. For example, is having cable or satellite TV a necessity? Purchasing things we need is an effective way to begin cutting expenses.

Before purchasing an item, ask the following questions:

• Do we already own one?
• Can we postpone the purchase?
• Can we substitute something else that costs less?
• Can we use our skills to make it?
• Do we really need the item?

One way to see where your money goes is to assess day-to-day spending. Keep track of every penny spent for a week and then increase the tracking for two, three, and four weeks. It is most important to track the daily spending pattern. The rent, utility bills, and other monthly expenditures aren’t the major concerns when tracking spending. After tracking the spending, find the areas of most consistent spending. Is it food, recreation, clothing, etc.? Two areas where most families can cut is food and clothing.

Controlling spending can be a challenge. Families can develop a sound financial plan by working through their expenditures, reducing wasteful spending, and following a budget.

All family members need to work together to reduce spending. Communication among family members is very important during difficult financial times. Children need to know the family’s financial situation. So they understand why they cannot purchase or have things others have. Teaching children about money and how to handle money should be a top priority.

In order to have the standard of living one is accustomed to during hard times it may be necessary to reduce spending, give up a want, or find a second income. The second income may be another job or using a skill such as baking, making a craft or other items to sell.

Most families have a goal of wanting to get better at saving money. Being a wise spender allows people to save for a special vacation or to put money away for children’s college expenses. Following a household budget takes practice, and some families never quite accomplish using a budget. By setting priorities and watching spending, most families can live a comfortable lifestyle.


10 Tips for Saving Money

1. Set priorities for spending. Make short, medium, and long term goals. Develop a savings plan for reaching the goals.
2. Limit small spending. How much money is being spent on $5 lattes, pop, candy, cigarettes, and other items?
3. Look at services you are paying for but not using. Do you have health-club memberships, phone service, magazines, newspapers, unwatched cable packages, and other expenses that can be eliminated. Eliminate items not being used. Don’t pay long distance fees on a landline if you use your cell phone for long distance calls.
4. Food — take your lunch to work a couple days a week. Try scaling back on fast food and eating out. Use coupons or watch for specials.
5. Clothing — Children often outgrow their clothing before wearing them out. This can be an expensive and frustrating experience, so don’t let their wardrobes get too large. Watch for sales or share clothes with relatives.
6. Recreation — Look at inexpensive ways to do things with the family. Search out free activities, concerts, parks, and community events. Plan a family night which includes playing board games, cards, etc. Rather than spending money at the movie theater, check out movies from the library, watch a movie on TV, or borrow one from a friend.
7. When buying a house or renting an apartment, select one you can afford.
8. Consider ways to cut down on utility bills and energy usage. In the winter, set the thermostat no higher than 72°F when you are home. Lower the thermostat when you are away for more than four hours or asleep. You can save approximately 10 percent on heating bills by turning the thermostat back 10–15 degrees for eight hours a day. In the summer, set the thermostat at 78°F. Save energy by unplugging chargers when the charged item is removed. Switch out incandescent bulbs for compact fluorescent bulbs — the initial cost is more but there is savings in the long run.
9. Another area of expense for families is pets. Many families want and enjoy pets but don’t realize the cost of keeping a pet. On the average it cost approximately $1,000 a year to have a pet. One must consider food, vaccinations, boarding, treats, and other items necessary for keeping pets whether it is a cat, dog, bird, or other pet.
10. Be a wise shopper and check the sale ads. Make a list and stick to it at the grocery store. Go shopping as few times as possible. Many trips can add to costs and purchasing unnecessary items.
Private Pesticide Applicator Certification Opportunities

Federal and state law states a private applicator pesticide must be certified and licensed to buy, use, or supervise the use of a Restricted-Use Pesticide (RUP) to produce an agricultural commodity on property they own or rent — or — on an employer's property if the applicator is an employee of the farmer. No pesticide license is needed if the applicator will only be applying General Use Pesticides (GUPs) or if you hire a commercial applicator to apply RUPs to your property. If you do not have a current private pesticide certification and you plan to buy or apply any RUP products, you will need to receive the same certification training as described below for people who need to be recertified.

All training sessions meet the requirements for both initial certification or recertification as private pesticide applicators. If your private applicator certification expires in 2011, you will receive (or have already received) a certification letter from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA). Be sure to keep the letter and bring it with you to the training session you choose or when you pick up home-study materials. The NDA letter contains a bar-code form which tells NDA who you need to know about you.

Regardless of the certification method chosen, all applicators must receive an invoice from the NDA for the $25 license fee. Note: we cannot accept credit cards for payment at the extension office. The certification and lice fee is good for three years, expiring on April 15, 2014 for those who certify this spring. You should receive your new license within three weeks.

Private pesticide applicators will have four alternative methods to obtain either recertification or initial certification.

Traditional Training Sessions

Three private pesticide applicator training sessions have been scheduled in 2011 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 900 N. Clarkson St. (Midland University Event Center, The Auditorium, 612 N. Cherrycreek Road in Lincoln. The dates and times are:
- Thursday, Jan. 20, from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 29, from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 2, from 8:30-9:30 p.m.

These training sessions will be certified at the training session (make checks out to Lancaster County Extension).

Self-Study Option

The second option is to pick up the study book, and associated materials at the extension office. You are expected to study the material and then you must answer the written test questions in the back of the book. When you bring the book back to the office, the test will be graded by our staff while you wait (usually about five minutes). You will have an opportunity to see the test results and see the correct answers to any questions you have answered incorrectly.

The $60 training fee for this method of obtaining certification will be collected when the home-study book is picked up.

Testing Option

The third option is to take a written closed-book examination given by the NDA. Please contact NDA at (402) 471-2394 for dates of testing. There is no training fee if you choose this option. You will need to pay the $25 license fee. You should receive your new license within two weeks after you receive a passing grade on your written test.

Certify at a Crop Production Clinic

The former Crop Protection Clinics have been restructured with an extended range of topics and are now called Crop Production Clinics. For most of the day, participants will make choices between two or more topics being presented concurrently. Private applicators may receive initial certification or recertification by attending the full day and attending the mandatory sessions to certify as a private applicator.

There will not be a clinic in Lincoln in 2011. The Crop Production Clinics held in southeast Nebraska will be:
- Tuesday, Jan. 11 — Beatrice (Beatrice Country Club, 1301 Oak St.)
- Wednesday, Jan. 12 — York (The Auditorium, 612 N. Nebraska Ave.)
- Thursday, Jan. 20 — Fremont (Midland University Event Center, 900 N. Clarkson St.)
- Thursday, Jan. 27 from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Saturday, Jan. 29, from 8:30-11:30 a.m.
- Wednesday, Feb. 2, from 8:30-9:30 p.m.

University of Nebraska—Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County is sponsoring a Land Owners Update meeting on Monday, Jan. 24, 8 a.m.—Noon at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln. Cost is only $20 to cover refreshments, handouts, and materials. Registration is required by Jan. 17 and space will be limited to the first 60 participants. For a registration form, call (402) 441-7180 or go to http://lancaster.unl.edu/ag and click on “Upcoming Workshops.”

Understanding the transition to a tenant rent——management is critical to success in today’s farming industry. If you are a farm owner, how has your land investment changed over the past several years? If you are a grower, have you been as efficient as possible managing your land input?

The objective of this program is to provide practical information and strategies to help Nebraska land owners, managers, and farm operators understand the recent trends in agricultural land values and rental rates. We will also take a look down the road to see how land management will be the key to future success in farming.

Topics include trends in ownership — who is buying and who. We will also seek to understand how far the market has come in a short period of time and where we might be headed in the future. Participants will receive additional strategies for sizing up the potential land opportunity and how to deal with the volatile that has become a sellers/renters market.

If you are a grower, learn strategies on how you can stand out as the landlord owner. If you are a land owner, learn how to pick the best renter that offers both stability and sustainability in your market investment.

Sponsors include Tim Lemmons, UNL Extension Educator for Northeast Nebraska, Allan Vishynak, UNL Extension Educator from Platte County, as well as others.

For more information, contact Tom Dorn, Extension Educator from Lancaster County, at (402) 441-7180 or tdorn1@unl.edu.

Land Owners Update Meeting, Jan. 24

One of the most popular crop production extension programs, the Computerized Financial Recordkeeping Training will be offered Thursday, March 3, from 9 a.m. — 4 p.m. in the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road in Lincoln. Pre-register before Feb. 18. Preregistration is required to hold a spot.

The concepts taught in this training are applicable to several inexpensive computerized record keeping software programs, with slight modifications in procedure.

This training will be taught hands on using Excel Deluxe in the classroom. All instruction will be presented in a hands-on style with participants sitting at computers performing the tasks being demonstrated. To save time, much of the instruction on generation—off—site data will be done using sample files created to represent a typical crop and livestock farming operation. Participants will receive step—by—step instructions for all tasks being demonstrated. Many folks for the spreadsheets are one of the best aspects of the training, plus a hands—on approach for detailed information and registration form, visit the extension office at http://lancaster.unl.edu/ag and look under “Upcoming Workshops,” or call (402) 441-7180.

Soil Fertility — Phosphorus

Nebraska soils are generally well supplied with phosphorus, but only a small fraction of the total phosphorus held in any given soil form which plants are able to take up and utilize. Total phosphorus contents in eastern Nebraska soils average about 4,700 pounds of P₂O₅ per acre for each foot of soil. Most Nebraska soils contain about 28,000 pounds of total phosphorus as P₂O₅ in the top six feet of soil. If our crops could use the phosphorus in the top six feet of soil, we would have a 500-year supply for growing 150 bushels of corn per acre.

Even with many tons of total phosphorus present in the root zone, available phosphorus may be deficient for maximum crop yields. By testing the soil, our goal is to determine the amount of available phosphorus already present in the soil and decide how much additional phosphorus is needed to maximize economic crop returns.

In addition to chemical analysis results, soil test lab categorize the levels of the various nutrients on a relative scale. Very low and Low ratings indicate, based on field correlation studies, expect a yield response to an application of the nutrient a high percentage of the time, provided the other essential nutrients are adequate for optimum yield. When the soil test lab indicates that your phosphorus is very low, most soil test labs will recommend the addition of sufficient amounts of P₂O₅ to the crop to replace the amount extracted by the crop, based on the yield goal, plus an extra amount to slowly build the soil test level.

Medium ratings indicate a yield increase would be expected part of the time. The amount of the nutrient recommended varies depending on the philosophy of the lab. Some labs recommend based on replace and build philosophy, others recommend applying only the amount shown to result in a significant yield response based on widespread field correlation studies.

High ratings indicate the nutrient is present in the soil in sufficient amounts so expect a yield increase from additional fertilizer application.

Very high ratings indicate the nutrient is not expected to be a limiting factor. For annual crops, such as wheat, corn, milo, or soybeans; the most efficient way to apply phosphorus is to apply it at the band at the time of planting. An alternative is a broadcast application of float band fertilizer when it can be incorporated into the soil. Generally, band applications of phosphorus fertilizers result in only one-half the rate of phosphorus per acre to achieve the same yield results as broadcast and incorporated applications because the more concentrated band is not converted to unavailable forms (fixed) as quickly.

Top dressing phosphorus can be effective for perennial crops such as alfalfa and some home—grass. These crops have very vigorous crowns from which many fine roots originate, thus phosphorus uptake can occur see PHOSPHORUS on page 11.
Meet Spots: Lincoln’s Bed Bug-Sniffing Dog

Barb Ogg
UNL Extension Educator

Spots is the perfect employee. He’s low to the ground and doesn’t mind being on all fours. He is doggedly tenacious. He never whines about working conditions. And best of all, he works for kibble. Spots is a bed bug-sniffing dog.

Well-trained bed bug-sniffing dogs are extraordinarily accurate and much more accurate than humans at finding bed bugs. Entomology researchers at the University of Florida reported well-trained dogs can detect bed bugs with 96 percent accuracy. Spots was trained in Kansas at Iron Heart High Performance Working Dogs. One of the biggest difficulties in controlling bed bugs is finding infestations when they are small and easier to control. Because bed bugs feed at night and hide during the daytime, people often do not know they have an infestation. They may attribute a few bites to other causes. Most of the time, people do not see live bugs until the infestation is well established. When that happens, bed bugs are harder to control. Finding a small infestation can be tough. Inspecting requires dismantling a bed, removing the sheets, flipping over the mattress and examining the inside of the box springs. It is even more difficult to find bed bugs in a solo or easy day. An easier and more accurate inspection can be executed with a dog — one specifically trained to detect bed bugs. These special dogs are trained alongside dogs that sniff out narcotics, explosives, or cadavers.

James and Amy Pelowski are Spots’ owners. As good as Spots is, the dog handler is just as important. James went through extensive training with Spots and is a certified dog handler. Every day, James puts Spots through a series of bed bug detecting exercises to maintain his training. He gets fed only when he finds live bed bugs. He is truly a working dog.

Spots has been trained to only detect live bed bugs and bed bug eggs. This is important because he won’t key on dead bugs killed by previous treatments.

If a person knows he has bed bugs, he doesn’t make sense to hire Spots. But it might make sense to hire a dog: if it is important to know if other bedrooms are infested or whether the sofa needs to be treated or discarded.

• if the neighboring apartment has bed bugs and the landlord wants to know if bed bugs have moved into neighboring units.
• if a person wants to make sure the bed bug infestation has been eradicated. (James says you must wait 30 days after a chemical treatment for Spots to accurately find bed bugs.)
• if bed bugs are suspected in locations where bed bugs might be scattered, as office buildings, hospitals, schools, and movie theaters. Earlier this year, a movie theater company in New York City received complaints about bed bugs in their theaters. They hired a dog who found bed bugs in only two of the 4,700 seats, saving treatment costs and preventing unnecessary insecticide exposure.

You Can Still Enjoy Feeding Birds Even on a Budget

Soni Cochran
UNL Extension Associate

If finances are tight, you can still find ways to enjoy watching birds and bird feeding without busting your budget. Try these tips:

1. Learn about birds and wildlife found in our area. By learning about birds and wildlife found in our area, you’ll make the best choices when it comes to selecting bird seed, feeders and plants to add to your landscape.

Bird and wildlife field guides are not overly expensive and make great gifts. Be sure to purchase guides especially written for birds and animals found in your region. Field guides can be checked out from the library. Bookstores also carry field guides. And if you are lucky, you might find one at a garage sale or thrift store. For an inexpensive, fun family outing, consider a trip to one of these sites to learn more about feeding birds and wildlife found locally:

- Pioneers Nature Center in Lincoln; http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/naturecenter.

2. Shop around for bird seed. Check flyers from pet stores, farm supply stores, nurseries, specialty wild bird feeding stores, discount stores, and more. Shop when prices are lower. You can also check on-line for stores with competitive prices, but remember to figure in shipping and handling costs. If you only feed birds during fall/winter, make sure you use up the seed so you don’t have to store it over the summer.

3. Offer better seed. Avoid mixes of seed containing fillers like milo. These bags of seed may seem less expensive, but you’ll quickly find out birds waste most of the seed. They kick the filler seed right onto the ground where it spoils. It is wise to use Niger seed and hulled sunflower chips, you’ll get much less waste and have fewer seed hulls to clean up. Black-oil sunflower seeds and safflower are also a good combination for many birds in our area.

4. Buy bird seed in bulk. Larger bags or buckets of bird seed are usually sold at a better price-per-pound of seed. And by buying in larger quantities, you may save money for trips to the store. If you are buying in bulk, store your bird seed in rodent-proof containers. Purchase or use a clean, metal garbage can with a tight-fitting lid. Keep the seed bin in an unheated garage or outside shed to help discourage pantry pests from infesting the seed. These pests see BIRDS on page 11.
Test Your Salt Savvy

Alice Henneman, MS, RD
Extension Educator

Salt is in the news a lot lately. Most reports say Americans are consuming too much of it. How much do you REALLY know about salt? Test your "salt savvy" with the following quiz!

Before you read further, you may wonder, "What's the difference between 'salt' and 'sodium'?

• Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt.
• The words salt and sodium are not exactly the same, yet these words are often used in place of each other. For example, the Nutrition Facts Panel uses "sodium," whereas the front of the package may say "low salt."
• Ninety percent of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt.
• In the following questions and answers, the terms "salt" and "sodium" will be used interchangeably.

Questions:
1) How much salt/sodium does the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science recommend people strive to eat daily?
   a. 1,500 mg
   b. 2,300 mg
   c. 2,400 mg
   d. 3,000 mg

2) What is the approximate average daily sodium intake for persons age 2 and up in the United States?
   a. 800 mg
   b. 1,500 mg
   c. 2,300 mg
   d. 3,400 mg

3) Which of the following are benefits from reducing the amount of salt/sodium in your diet?
   a. Lowered blood pressure
   b. Reduced risk of heart disease
   c. Reduced risk of stroke
   d. Reduced risk of gastric cancer
   e. All of the above

4) Approximately how much of our sodium comes from processed foods?
   a. 45%
   b. 55%
   c. 65%
   d. 75%

5) How much sodium is in a teaspoon of salt?
   a. 1,300 mg
   b. 2,300 mg
   c. 3,300 mg

6) Can foods be high in salt without tasting salty?
   a. Yes
   b. No

7) Based on the Nutrition Facts label below, how much sodium is in 1 cup of the food?
   a. 20 mg
   b. 250 mg
   c. 470 mg

Nutrition Facts
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2
Amount Per Serving Calories 350 Calories from Fat 110
Total Fat 13g
Saturated Fat 3g
Trans Fat 0g
Cholesterol 10g
Sodium 1,090mg
Total Carbohydrate 31g
Dietary Fiber 9g
Sugars 9g
Protein 10g
Vitamin A 4%
Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 50%
Iron 4%

Data shows this 1,500 mg recommendation was not adopted by persons age 2 and up is 3,436 mg. This amount equals about 1.5 teaspoons of salt per day.

3) All of the above.

4) d. 75 percent

5) The natural sodium content of food, on average, accounts for only 10 percent of total intake. Discretionary salt use (i.e., table and cooking salt) provides another 5 to 10 percent of sodium.

6) Yes

7) d. 75 percent

Answers:
1) a. 1,500 mg.
2) d. 3,400 mg.
3) e. All of the above.
4) d. 75 percent
5) b. No
6) a. Yes
7) d. 75 percent

Family Meals Have Many Benefits

Julie Rasmussen
UNL Extension Associate

Have you made your New Year's resolution? Why not make one around family meals? If you aren't eating meals together, now is the time to find ways to make it happen. If you are eating together, think of ways to make the meal time even better.

There are many benefits to eating together. Family meals tend to be more nutritious. We often give a little more thought to meals when it is a meal eaten as a family. It is also a great time to communicate and have a good time as a family.

Here are some ideas to make family meals work for your family:
• Make meal times enjoyable

Family meals will be more successful if it is something your family wants to do. Be positive. Think of ways to include family members in conversation. Look for ways to make it a special time for your family.
• Take a look at schedules
One difficulty with family meals is finding the time. Look for times when most family members will be home. Some days the best time for a family meal might be breakfast.
• Limit distractions
Turn the television off and only take phone calls if it is an emergency.

Answers:
1) a. 1,500 mg.
2) d. 3,400 mg.
3) e. All of the above.
4) d. 75 percent
5) b. No
6) a. Yes
7) d. 75 percent

• Start traditions
• Have the family help
• Keep it simple

Start traditions that every family can do. Don't mean to mean more work. A good meal can be simple and easy.

• Set a good example

Take manners by using good manners. Your children are more likely to like and eat vegetables if you are eating them.

• Keep it simple

Make family meals that do not need to mean more work. A good meal can be simple and easy.
Salt Savvy
continued from processing page the total. About 75 percent is derived from salt added during processing by manufacturers. The most effective strategies for reducing sodium, therefore, are reducing sodium during food processing, and for individuals to choose more fresh, less processed items and to use less salt during food preparation.21

5) b. 2,300 mg.42
6) b. Yes. For example, a food can taste sweet and still contain a significant amount of salt. The best way to determine the amount of salt in a food is to check the Nutrition Facts Label.15
7) c. 470 mg. When reading nutrition labels, it is important to check the amount of sodium in the serving size you are consuming. For example, if you ate 1.5 cups of this food, you would consume 705 mg of sodium.

FCE News & Events
The schedule for next year’s Family & Community Education (FCE) and community leader training lessons are being planned. All lessons will be presented at 1 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycrest Road, Lincoln. Non-FCE members or groups should call Pam at (402) 441-7180 to register for these lessons so materials can be prepared.

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2011 Training Lessons
Leah ter Training Lesson, "Chocolate — A Functional Food?", Jan. 5
The FCE Community Leader Training Lesson "Chocolate — A Functional Food?" will be Wednesday, Jan. 5, 1 p.m. Extension Educator Alice Henneman will present the lesson. This lesson will help you learn about the different types of chocolate, explore the health benefits of chocolate and demystify the functional food jungle in the grocery store.

Leader Training Lesson, "Healthy Meal Planning on a Budget", Jan. 26
The FCE and Community Leader Training Lesson "Healthy Meal Planning on a Budget" will be Wednesday, Jan. 26, 1 p.m. Extension Educator Alice Henneman will present the lesson. This lesson will teach participants how to plan healthy, delicious meals, consistent with the dietary guidelines, while on a limited budget.

Council Meeting, Jan. 24
The January FCE Council meeting is scheduled for Monday, Jan. 24, 12:30 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. The monthly business meeting will be held. Following the business meeting members will make a Forever Card. All FCE members are invited to attend. Call (402) 441-7180 to register.

Subscribe to a FREE Parenting Educational Newsletter!

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Nebraska Earth-Kind® Roses are Low-Maintenance, High Performance

Earth-Kind® Roses are low-input roses that combine outstanding performance and superior disease tolerance. Less water, fertilizer, and pesticides are needed to grow these beautiful landscape roses.

To prepare the site: Till in three-inches of compost. Plant the roses in a location that receives eight or more hours of direct sunlight each day and away from structures/plants that impede air flow. Maintain three-inches of mulch over the planting bed and replenish as it decomposes. Roses should be watered one-inch per week for the first growing season; one-inch per month during the second growing season; and not watered at all from the third growing season on.

Ten rose varieties received the Earth-Kind® designation recently conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Master Gardeners and the Omaha Plant Society.

- **Barn Dance:** 36 inches by 60 inches; pink/orange flower color; fragrant; prolific blooms; recovers quickly from blackspot; blooms resemble those of a hybrid tea rose.

- **Blushing Knock Out:** 34 inches by 54 inches; pale pink flower color; slightly fragrant; no blackspot; some winter dieback.

- **Carefree Beauty:** 54 inches by 80 inches; pink, double flower; fragrant; prolific; large blooms; some winter dieback.

- **Earth Song:** 52 inches by 70 inches; pink, double flower; fragrant; prolific blooms; recovers quickly from blackspot.

- **Knock Out:** 34 inches by 47 inches; cherry red flower color; not fragrant; significant winter dieback but does recover; no blackspot; introduced in 2000.

- **Pink Knock Out:** 32 inches by 60 inches; medium pink flower color; not fragrant; some winter dieback; no blackspot; very shiny leaves.

- **Princess Verona:** 64 inches by 74 inches; medium pink, double flower; fragrant; upright plant; prolific blooms; orange-red hips in fall.

- **Sea Foam:** 23 inches by 75 inches, creamy white flower color; not fragrant; a great groundcover rose; rose petals don’t self-clean; significant winter dieback but does recover.

- **The Fairy:** 26 inches by 60 inches, pink flower color, not fragrant; introduced in 1932; diminutive one-inch flowers in large clusters; some winter dieback.

The 2011 Perennial Plant of the Year: Arkansas Blue Star

**Arkansas Blue Star (Amsonia hubrichtii)** flowers in late spring to early summer (left). The leaves are bright green in spring and summer (above), but turn bright yellow-gold in fall (below).

The 2011 Perennial Plant of the Year has lots of color, beautiful foliage, and will fit right in Nebraska perennial flower gardens. **Amsonia hubrichtii,** also known as Arkansas Blue Star, grows 36 inches tall and 36 inches wide in a mounded form. This hardy perennial grows in hardiness zones 4 through 9 and is a versatile North American native. Amsonia offers a variety of features throughout the seasons. From late spring to early summer, two- to three-inch wide clusters of small, light blue, star-shaped flowers top the ferny foliage. The alternate-arranged leaves are bright green in spring and summer, but turn a bright yellow-golden color in the fall. Arkansas Blue Star thrives in full sun to partial shade. This plant does best in average, moist soil but tolerates less moisture.

Once it is established it can tolerate drier conditions. This perennial for the seasons is an asset in borders, native gardens, cottage gardens, or open woodland areas. It is best when mass planted. Arkansas blue star is attractive when mixed with ornamental grasses and plants that have attractive seed heads.
Extension Strengthens Nebraska by Extending the University’s Research-Based Resources

Land-grant universities work with the people they serve. University of Nebraska–Lincoln teaches, discovers new knowledge through research, and extends this research-based information across the state through extension programs. UNL Extension in Lancaster County develops and delivers educational programs which strengthen individuals, families, businesses, and communities. For example:

- Since 2001, Extension Educator Tom Dorn has helped present 15 Computerized Farm Financial Recordkeeping Trainings to representatives from 202 farming operations in southeast Nebraska. Past evaluations indicate 98% of participants learned how to create reports to retrieve and organize financial information which will help them make better management decisions in the future.

- Since 2000, the Nutrition Education Program School Enrichment Kits have increased nutrition education in local classrooms from an average of two hours to 11 hours per classroom/year. To date, 35,879 students from 1,893 classrooms (grades K-8) have benefited from 20,000 total hours of teaching. Teachers have noticed students choosing healthier foods and improving their eating habits.

- Extension Educator Barb Ogg is known as a bed bug expert. She has been quoted by newspapers and appeared on TV and radio. This year, Barb organized four bed bug workshops which had 337 total attendees (landlords attending manage more than 5,500 units total) and gave 20 presentations to agencies, businesses, and non-profit organizations with approximately 1,110 total attendees.

- This year, Extension Educator Maureen Burson presented 25 Guardianship Trainings to 286 guardians in Lancaster and nearby counties. Based upon a 90% statewide return rate, evaluations indicate 95% better understand their responsibilities to the court, compared to 25% prior to the class, and 98% better understand their responsibility to their wards compared to 48% prior to the class.

- In March, 131 child care providers who care for approximately 1,520 youth participated in a child care conference organized by Extension Educator Lorene Bartos and other Lincoln agencies. Evaluations by past attendees indicate 67% increased hands-on activities, and 54% increased daily learning activities.

- In November, Extension Educator Alice Heneman presented “How to Add a Little Spice & Herbs (and Less Salt, Fat, Sugar, and Calories) to Your Life” at BryanLGH to 270 attendees. Web resources “Add a Little Spice (and Herbs) to Your Life!” were accessed 3,103 times this year.

- Staff responded to approximately 37,500 phone calls, walk-ins, and emails from the public requesting information.

- The Web site http://lancaster.unl.edu continued to expand, receiving more than 11.2 million hits this year (see next page).

- UNL Extension coordinates distribution and application of biosolids to agricultural cropland for the City of Lincoln. Over the last 18 years, more than 500,000 tons of biosolids have been recycled, increasing soil nutrients, organic matter, and crop yields. This biosolids recycling program will increase the life of the North Bluff Landfill by 4.9 years.

- The University’s Research-Based Resources website—http://lancaster.unl.edu—continues to grow. Reported activities include more than 50,000 hits last year, and this year (see next page).
Benefits of Land-Grant Universities

Without question, our nation has enjoyed tremendous social and economic benefits from land-grant universities. Providing educational opportunities for all people, these universities have fueled our nation’s capacity to create an enormously productive food and agricultural enterprise system.

Land-grant universities, over time, also transformed our country through the dissemination of research-based knowledge to not only those enrolled as university students, but to those earning a livelihood and raising their families. Given educational opportunities to improve production techniques and practices, more and more people improved their lives and levels of income.

In 1867, an independent study found the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LNRA), of which extension is an integral part, provides at least a 15-to-1 return on the state tax dollars Nebraska invested.

The University of Nebraska—Lincoln hosts an international group interested in knowing more about our programs and delivery systems. Usually, about once a year, our extension office visits countries monthly. For example, countries have admired and tried to replicate our system envied throughout the world.

It really is a system that provides unbiased research-based information to the people. Without question, our nation’s land-grant universities, over more than 11.2 million hits (accesses) this past year! The Web site contains thousands of pages of content — featuring延伸 research-based knowledge to not only students, but to those earning a livelihood and raising their families.

Lancaster Extension Education Center Conference Facilities

As part of extension’s commitment to community learning, the conference facilities are made available to other nonprofit and governmental organizations at a nominal cost. Last year, more than 4,800 hours of conferences and meetings were held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center.

Lancaster Extension Education Center Conference Facilities

http://lancaster.unl.edu is Your 24/7 Local Extension Connection

Through search engines and browsing, hundreds of thousands of people access UNL Extension’s Web site, http://lancaster.unl.edu, to find “Know How — Know Now.”

The Web site contains thousands of pages of content — featuring延伸 research-based knowledge to not only students, but to those earning a livelihood and raising their families.

Extension Associate Deanna Frogge

• 20 years of service with UNL

Extension Educator Alice Henneman

• received a statewide Extension Award of Excellence: Creativity and Vision for Extension Presence at Husker Harvest Days presented by Elbert Dickey, dean and director of UNL Extension

• 30 years of service with UNL

Extension Educator Don Janssen

• retired after 30 years of service with UNL

Extension Assistant Vicki Jeldicka

• received the statewide Distinguished Managerial/Professional award presented by UNL Extension

Extension Associate Deanna Karmazin

• President-Elect of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Association (NCEA)

Extension Associate Mardel Meinke

• 15 years of service with UNL

Extension Educator Barb Ogg

• 15 years of service with UNL

Lancaster County 4-H Embryology School Enrichment Program

• received a statewide award presented by the Nebraska Poultry Industries and the Poultry & Egg Division of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture.

Lancaster County Nutrition Education Program’s School Enrichment, Karen Wobig, Mary Abbott, and Zainab Rida

• received the statewide Excellence in Team Programming award presented by UNL Extension

Lancaster County 4-H 2009 Year in Review Video

• received the national and regional award for Communication Award – Video Program presented by the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA)

Lancaster County staff received three awards at the statewide extension conference.
4-H Youth Develop Positive Skills for Life

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H youth development program is open to all youth ages 5–18. Emphasis is on developing life skills through learning-by-doing.

Lancaster County 4-H consists of:

- **Organized Clubs** — More than 1,220 4-H clubs. Each club ranges from 5 to 100 members and is led (or co-led) by adults. Youth choose officers to run meetings. Clubs usually work on one or more projects together.

- **Independent Members** — With increasingly busy schedules, more and more youth are becoming independent 4-H members. Youth and families work independently on 4-H projects.

- **Projects** — Youth can choose from numerous 4-H projects. Project manuals are developed by experts and most project manuals have leader guides.

- **School Enrichment** — 4-H programs for classrooms include: Garbology (2nd grade), Embryology (3rd grade), Ag Awareness Festival (4th grade), earth wellness festival (5th grade), and Nutrition Education Program (K–8th grade in qualifying schools). These curricula meet Nebraska Curriculum Standards.

- **After-School Programs** — 27 Lincoln after-school programs have incorporated 4-H projects into their activities, 18 sites have formed 4-H clubs, and 27 summer sites participated in 4-H county fair exploration activities.

- **4-H Embryology Web Site** — EGG Cam and other resources at http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/Embryology.

- **Educational Events** — 4-H staff organize events such as Clover College, workshops, contests, and leader trainings.

- **Leadership Opportunities** — 4-H Teen Council, 4-H Council, Citizenship Washington Focus, and more.

In the past year, Lancaster County 4-H reached nearly:

- 1,742 club members
- 392 independent members
- 958 youth in after-school and summer programs which incorporated 4-H activities
- 18,635 youth in 4-H school enrichment programs

Kyle Pedersen became the first Lancaster County 4-H'er to achieve the Diamond–Level 6 in the Nebraska 4-H Diamond Clover Program. Kyle’s service-learning project included transplanting nearly 200 plants to a children’s home and starting a 4-H club for the children at the home.

Citizenship Washington Focus is a 4-H leadership program for high school youth to explore and develop civic engagement. Two years of preparation and fundraising for 28 Lancaster County youth culminated in June with a 12-day educational seminar to Washington D.C. Learning experiences included meeting with Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson (left) and Congressman Jeff Fortenberry (in back).

New this year, the 4-H livestock booster committee established a 4-H & FFA livestock auction at the Lancaster County Super Fair. A portion of all proceeds was set aside to start a scholarship program for local 4-H & FFA members.

AmeriCorps Member part of Go-Green Initiative

Sarah Bailey spent a year with UNL Extension in Lancaster County as an AmeriCorps State and National member. AmeriCorps places members in local organizations for one-year terms. Sarah was a part of the AmeriCorps Recovery-Go Green Initiative which provides community outreach and service focused on environmental issues. She worked with 4-H after-school programs, 4-H school enrichment, People’s City Mission garden, and took the lead in renovating the Culler Middle School courtyard into an outdoor classroom and rain garden.

As 4-H’ers work on projects, they develop life skills, leadership, and citizenship. Our communities benefit because youth apply these skills to all aspects of their lives.” — Quentin Farley, president of 4-H Council and member of Lancaster County Extension Board
Extension Helps You Know How. Know Now.

Nutrition & Food Safety

To help people learn how to eat healthier, extension blends nutrition, food safety, and food preparation information into practical actions people can use in their daily lives. Educational materials developed by Extension Educator Alice Henneman for use in local programs (such as PowerPoints and handouts) are made available on the Internet for around-the-clock access, both locally and nationwide. UNL Extension in Lancaster County’s Food Web site received nearly 4.5 million hits last year.

This year, Alice chaired a committee of about 30 UNL staff to develop extension’s statewide Food Web site at http://food.unl.edu. Alice also helped coordinate planning of the display at Husker Harvest Days which promoted the launch of the Food Web Site in September. Topics on the statewide Web site include food safety, food allergies, local foods, meat products, home food preservation, food processing/business development, youth 6-18, and more. The Lancaster County Nutrition Education Program (NEP) helps 4-H and program families learn to prepare nutritious and safe foods while stretching their food dollars. NEP receives funding from the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) through USDA and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Ed (SNAP-Ed). Last year, Lancaster County NEP reached:
- 857 enrolled program families (1,430 teaching contacts),
- 7,462 youth (14,214 teaching contacts) at 28 schools and other sites,
- 92 older adults (428 teaching contacts) at 6 senior sites.

UNL Extension continues to make agricultural profitability and sustainability a priority issue. Extension Educator Tom Dorn fulfills this goal through numerous workshops and meetings, educational resources, person-to-person contacts, and an up-to-date Web site. Some of the agricultural programs presented this year include:
- Private and Commercial Pesticide Applicator Trainings,
- Computerized Farm Financial Recordkeeping Training,
- Farmland Leasing Arrangements workshop, and
- Corn/Soybean Profitability workshop.

Residential acreages are rapidly increasing in Lancaster County. Extension delivers information on a wide range of issues related to acreages such as proper management of septic tanks and wastewater lagoons, landscape management, and alternative crops profitable for acreages. Extension offers an Acreage and Small Farms Insights Web site. Production ag and acreage resources are online at http://lancaster.unl.edu/ag.

Home & Family Living

Extension Educator Lorene Bartos shares her expertise on home maintenance, indoor air quality, lead paint hazards, safety in the home, shopping smart, and recycling through Tom Nuxoll, extension’s Web site, her weekly column in the “Lincoln Journal Star,” and other outreach methods. She presented or helped present numerous workshops including RentWise, Window of Opportunity Child Care Conference, and Small Steps to Health and Wealth.

UNL Extension is part of the Lancaster County Coalition to assist Children of Parents Experiencing Divorce (COPED), and co-presents Parents Forever and Kids Talk About Divorce classes. Extension Educator Maureen Bursen teaches Parents Forever and Guardianship Training classes in Lancaster County. She also organized two Strengthening Families: Daughter/Mother Camps this year.

Plant and Pest Diagnostic Services

Throughout the year, Lancaster County residents bring plant samples, insects, and pests and wildlife “signs” to UNL Extension in Lancaster County. A free service, extension horticulturists and entomologists identify weeds, diseases, and insects in and around the home and garden, and make recommendations about the best way to help manage these problems.

Yard & Garden

UNL Extension plays a vital role in teaching communities horticulture issues designed for local weather, water, soil, and pest conditions. Extension helps property owners develop healthy, diverse and functional landscapes that are energy and water efficient, as well as less dependant on pesticides.

Extension works with the City of Lincoln to educate the public about reducing yard waste through composting, mulching grass clippings, and other yard management practices.

The Master Gardener Training Program is a volunteer program where people are given training by UNL personnel and then in return, provide 40 hours of volunteer service to extension’s educational programs. Extension Associare Mary Jane Frogge coordinates the Master Gardener program for Lancaster County.

UNL Extension in Lancaster County helps maintain a garden for residents at the People’s City Mission. Extension provides the expertise, networking, and volunteers to teach residents how to care for and harvest garden crops.

Family & Community Education (FCE) Clubs

The Family and Community Education (FCE) clubs are an educational, social, and community-oriented program designed to meet the needs and interests of Nebraska homemakers. FCE members help strengthen communities and families through education, leadership, and action. Lancaster County FCE’s emphasis is on community service and sponsoring a scholarship. Annually, FCE awards a $400 scholarship.

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.
Plants That add Interest or Color to Winter Landscape

Landslapes tend to be dark and gray this time of year, but careful planning can result in subsequent winter landscapes being more colorful and interesting. The key is selection of plant material and use of good design. Choose the variagated forms of a plant from which the garden will be most commonly enjoyed. Select planting sites easily seen from this area.

Green is the easiest color to add to a winter landscape with the use of evergreens like white spruce, Douglas-fir, or Japanese yew. Of course, parts of the plants other than foliage, can be colorful or interesting. Even trees with horizontal branching patterns are interesting if there is snow adding white to the dark color. Some plants that should be considered for winter landscapes include:

- **Red Osier Dogwood** (*Cornus stolonifera*) – The young stems of this plant are bright red during the winter months and become more intensely colored toward spring. Older stems are often pruned out during the spring to encourage more of the young, more brightly colored twigs.
- **Winged Euonymus** (*Euonymus alatus*) – This is the shrub that attracts so much attention in the fall because of the flaming red coloration of the fall foliage. However, the stems are also ornamental in the winter due to their winged characteristics which tend to catch and hold snow.
- **River Birch** (*Betula nigra*) – This tree has very interesting bark. The flaky bark is reddish-brown to peach colored and contrasts nicely with snow. Source: Ward Upham, Kansas State University
- **Betula nigra ‘Flaviramea’** – This shrub looks much like Red Osier Dogwood except the twigs are bright yellow rather than red.

Protect Woodlands from Grazing

Dennis Adams

**Nebraska Forest Service**

Hardwood (deciduous) woodlands in eastern Nebraska which have a history of livestock grazing are usually not very productive for timber, pasture, or wildlife. However, if protected and managed, woodlands can produce additional income. Healthy woodlands can give landowners an economic return.

Grazing lowers both the quantity and quality of hard- wood timber. Direct damage to roots and soil compaction from trampling slows tree growth. Over time, older trees are weakened and begin to decline. Dead tops and other defects are symptoms of grazing injury. A record of logs removed from a heavily grazed pasture in Nebraska revealed 60 to 70 percent were seriously defective and of no value.

The soil in natural woodland is covered with a blanket of leaves and humus. This rich mulch and loose porous soil containing high organic matter is needed for rapid growth of trees. Grazing destroys this protective covering and destroys soil structure, compacting soils so water and air cannot penetrate. The constant trampling and rubbing, if continued, eventually exposes tree roots to injury and drying.

When woodlands are grazed over a period of years, a gradual change occurs from forest to prairie conditions. Under grazing, as older trees die and disappear from the woodland, are not replaced by young trees. Grazing does not allow regeneration, either natural or planted.

Studies show some tree species are more palatable to livestock than others, such as ash, oak, and hickory. Unfortunately, these are usually the desirable timber species. Low-quality trees such as ironwood, honeylocust, and osage orange are seldom browsed, even during heavy grazing. Many undesirable species can withstand extensive trampling and damage. This situation results in a woodland composed of predominately undesirable trees because they are the only species that can survive and reproduce. Grazing compacts the normally loose soil, disturbs the leaf mold cover and destroys a large portion of the young growth. This causes the soil to become sun-baked and dry, conditions unfavorable to natural restocking. The loss of soil moisture in open, heavy-grazed woodlands is one of the reasons some woodlands fail to reestablish themselves with young trees.

Packed soil, resulting from grazing, also discourages rainfall absorption, allows a much greater runoff, contributes to erosion on slopes, and adds to the danger of floods. Experiments have revealed runoff from grazed woodlands may be around 50 times greater than from an ungrazed one.

In general, desirable hardwood trees and livestock do not mix. For the best return from both, fence the hardwood woodlands from the pastures.

Check Site Conditions Before Planting Trees

Dennis Adams

**Nebraska Forest Service**

Spring is an ideal time to add new trees to a home landscape. Once the frost is out of the ground, weather and soil conditions typically are ready to support a healthy tree.

Before purchasing a tree for planting, it is important to look at soil conditions and general lay-out of the area that will surround the new tree. Check for soil nutrient deficiencies and soil saturation levels. Some tree species may do better on wet soils, while others may handle drier conditions. Also consider factors such as wind and sun exposure. Overall, make sure the species is adaptable to Nebraska conditions.

Take time to visualize the landscape with the new tree. However, keep in mind the mature form and size the tree will grow to. Some trees may grow too large for an area, while small trees may not provide the desired shade cover.

Properly preparing the site for tree planting is important. The following are a few tips to help the process run smoothly:
- Dig the hole one foot wider than the transplanted tree’s root ball or root mass.
- Don’t plant the tree too deep. The surrounding soil line should not be above the tree’s root crown.
- Backfill the hole with the same soil. Don’t use soil amendments.
- Don’t pack the backfill soil. Use water to settle the backfill soil around the tree roots.
- In areas with prevalent high winds, it may be necessary to stake the tree to keep it free of damage.

Feeding Families Growing Farmers

Community CROPS Growing Farmers Workshops can help you jump start a small farm business. With Classroom learning, presentations from local farmers, and visits to local farms, Community CROPS can help you GROW YOUR OWN BUSINESS.

Come to the

Growing Farmers Workshop Series

Pre-register by January 14th, 2011

9 Saturday workshops beginning January 29th:
- Business Plans
- Financial Planning
- Crop Planning
- Equipment
- Organic Pest Management
- Marketing
- and more!

Pre-register at CommunityCROPS.org or call 402.474.9802

Urban Agriculture

January 2011

http://lancaster.unl.edu
4-H/FFA Market Beef Weigh-In, Feb. 3
4-H/FFA market beef weigh in will be held Thursday, Feb. 3, 6-8 p.m. at the Lancaster Event Center – Pavilion 3. Any market steer or heifer planning to show at county fair, state fair, or Ak-Sar-Ben 4-H Livestock Show must weigh in and get DNA processed at this time.

Crocketing Workshop, Feb. 5
All youth ages 8 and up (need not be enrolled in 4-H) are invited to learn how to crochet a washcloth utilizing the single crochet stitch at a basic crocheting workshop on Saturday, Feb. 5, 9 a.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherry Creek Road, Lincoln. All supplies will be provided. Adults are welcome to attend. Must preregister by Feb. 2 by calling (402) 441-7180. 4-H’ers may enter washcloths at the county fair under 4-H Clothing — Level 1 Knit or Crochet.

Do You Tweet? 4-H Tweets!
LancasterCo_4H is using Twitter. Twitter is a free service that lets you keep in touch with people through the exchange of quick, frequent messages. Join at http://twitter.com/LancasterCo_4H

2011 4-H Photography Themes
Every year, state 4-H has a Nebraska theme photography categories for county and state fair exhibits. This year’s Nebraska themes are:

- Photography — Unit 2: Cutting Edge Agriculture. Take photos that capture the diverse industry of agriculture. Look for unique images of agriculture in Nebraska communities.
- Photography — Unit 3: Spelling Bee: Photograph any letter of the alphabet in your surroundings. Find letters in the architecture of buildings, growing in a garden or on items in your own home.

Horse Stampede Entries Due Jan. 14
The 9th annual 4-H Horse Stampede will be held Saturday, Feb. 19 at the Animal Science Building on UNL East Campus. The Stampede consists of the 4-H state horse-related competitions: Horse Bowl, Public Speaking, Demonstration, and Art Contest. Stampede contestants must be enrolled in a 4-H horse project with the exception of the art contest. Contests may participate in all contests. Senior division is ages 14–18, junior division is 12–13. Teams are to consist of three to five youth.

Stampede T-shirts will be available to participating youth. You must pre-order your T-shirt, the cost is $8. Lancaster County 4-H Council will pay the entry fees for the contests! Stampede Entry forms along with T-shirt orders are due to Jan. 14 to the UNL Extension in Lancaster County office. Forms and additional information are available online at http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h/horsemanship.shtml

2011 Horsemanship Level Testing Dates
Mark your calendar! The 2011 group testings will be held at the Lancaster Event Center on the following dates:
- Tuesday, April 19, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, May 3, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 21, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, June 28, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, July 5, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, Oct. 1, 9 a.m.

Please RSVP at least by one week in advance with Marty at mcruickshank2@unl.edu or (402) 441-7180.

Governor’s Ag Awards Due March 2
The Governor’s Agricultural Excellence Awards are sponsored by the Nebraska Investment Finance Authority (NIFA) in cooperation with the Nebraska 4-H Foundation. These awards recognize 25 4-H clubs each year for the work of the individuals in the club and the community service work of the entire club. Recognition is in the form of $500 checks issued to the club’s treasury to be used as described in the award application form completed by the club. Forms are due by March 2 and the awards will be presented at UNL’s East Campus on June 27. For more information, go to www.ne4hfoundation.org/agexcellenceaward.htm.

Upcoming Sewing Workshops
Save the following dates for upcoming sewing workshops:
- Pillow Party, Saturday, March 12, 9 a.m. All youth ages 8 and up (need not be enrolled in 4-H) are invited to learn beginning sewing skills and make a pillow. Bring your sewing machine.
- Jammie Jamboree, Saturday, April 2, 9 a.m. All youth ages 8 and up (need not be enrolled in 4-H) are invited to learn basic sewing skills and make jammie bottoms. Bring your sewing machine.

January
Brandy Gunnerson
Lancaster County
4-H is proud to announce Brandy Gunnerson as winner of January’s “Heart of 4-H Award” in recognition of outstanding volunteer service. Brandy has volunteered for 4-H the past nine years. She has helped with the Creative Clivers and Rabbits ‘R’ Us clubs. At the Lancaster County Fair, she has been superintendent for 4-H rabbit static exhibits, volunteered at the 4-H Food Booth, and helped with other set up and clean up activities. She also helps with the statewide Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program.

“I like being a 4-H volunteer because I was in 4-H from the time I was 8 until I was 18,” Brandy says. “Being able to look back at my experiences makes me realize the importance of what 4-H can teach our children. The kids learn so much from everything they try whether it be one thing or many, learning something new or adding to knowledge they already have. Being a part of all that for my own children and others in our schools is rewarding. My favorite experience as a 4-H volunteer is watching the kids every year participate at the fair and seeing their hard work pay off. Watching the kids grow in so many ways from year to year makes every minute worth it.” Congratulations to Brandy. Volunteers like her are indeed the heart of 4-H!

Nominate your favorite 4-H volunteer by submitting the form available at http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h or at the extension office.
Lancaster County 4-H and 4-H Council invite ALL 4-H’ers, 4-H families and volunteers to

**4-H Achievement Night**

**Thursday, Feb. 10 • 6:30 p.m.**

Lancaster Extension Education Center
444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln

**Evening Starts With a Dessert Potluck**
Please bring a dessert to share (plates and utensils provided).

Lancaster County 4-H congratulates all 4-H youth who commit themselves to excellence!

4-H members, clubs and volunteers receiving awards, scholarships, or pins will be mailed detailed information.

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2011 4-H Calendar

All events will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln unless otherwise noted.

Lancaster Event Center is located at 84th & Havelock, Lincoln

### January
1. All Career Portfolios, Scholarships, and Award Applications Due to Extension
2. 4-H Council Meeting .......................................................... 7 p.m.
3. Teen Council Meeting ......................................................... 3 p.m.
4. Horse Stampede Entries Due to Extension
5. 4th & 5th Grade Overnight Lock-In Registrations Due to Extension
6. Pick-a-Pig Orientation Meeting, Lancaster Event Center .......................... 6:30 p.m.
7. 21-22 4th & 5th Grade Overnight Lock-In ................................ 8 p.m.–8 a.m.

### February
February is Nebraska 4-H Month
1. 4-H Council Meeting .......................................................... 7 p.m.
2. Crocheting Workshop ....................................................... 9 a.m.
3. Achievement Night ......................................................... 6:30 p.m.
4. Teen Council Meeting ....................................................... 3 p.m.
5. Horse Stampede, UNL Animal Science Building

### March
1. Preference Given to 4-H Council Camp Scholarship Entries Submitted to Extension by this Date
2. R.B. Warren 4-H Horse Educational and Grand Island Saddle Club Scholarships Entries Due
3. 4-H Council Meeting .......................................................... 7 p.m.
4. 11-13 Nebraska Horse Expo, Lancaster Event Center
5. Pillow Party ........................................................................ 9 a.m.
6. Teen Council Meeting ....................................................... 3 p.m.

### April
1. All 4-H/FFA Market Beef ID’s Due to Extension
2. Jammie Jamboree .............................................................. 9 a.m.
3. 4-H Council Meeting .......................................................... 7 p.m.
4. 2-3 2011 Shaggy Horse Dressage Show, Lancaster Event Center
5. 9 Kiwania Carnival, (Boat School) .......................................... TBA
6. Teen Council Meeting ....................................................... 3 p.m.
7. Sign-Up Deadline for April 19 Horse Level Testing
8. Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ....................... 6 p.m.
9. Paws On Dog Clinic, Lancaster Event Center – Exhibit Hall 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
10. CDs/Tapes Due for Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest
11. Sign-Up Deadline for May 3 Horse Level Testing

### May
1. 4-H Council Camp Scholarship Entries Due to Extension
2. Speech Contest ................................................................... 1 p.m.
3. 4-H Council Meeting .......................................................... 7 p.m.
4. Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ....................... 6 p.m.
5. 4-H/FFA Sheep Weigh-In, Lancaster Event Center ............... 6:30 p.m.
6. Furniture Painting Workshop ............................................. 9 a.m.
7. Lancaster County Deadline for District/State Horse Show Entries, ID, Level Tests
8. 19 4-H/FFA Quality Assurance Training ................................ 6 p.m.
9. 26 Leader Training ............................................................. 9:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

### June
1. County Fair Horse ID’s Due to Extension
2. 4-H Life Challenge Contest – County-Level Senior Division . 9 a.m.
3. Horse Pre-Districts Show/Fundraiser, Lancaster Event Center . TBA
4. 4-H Council Meeting ......................................................... 7 p.m.
5. 13, 14 District Horse Shows, Hastings, Columbus
6. Sign-Up Deadline for June 21 Horse Level Testing
7. 14-17 4-H Cyber College
8. Club Enrollment Forms Due to Extension — Must List Project Area(s)
9. Each Member Plans to Enter at County Fair
10. 4-H/FFA Sheep, Goats/Swine/Breeding Beef/Bucket Calves/Dairy Cattle/Llamas & Alpacas/Rabbits Identification Forms Due to Extension
11. 16 District Horse Shows, O’Neill, Chadron
12. 19 Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program, Niobrara State Park
13. 21 Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ..................... 6 p.m.
14. Sign-Up Deadline for June 28 Horse Level Testing
15. 22, 23 District Horse Shows, Ogallala, Beatrice
16. Bicycle Safety Contest ...................................................... 9 a.m.
17. Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ....................... 6 p.m.
18. Sign-Up Deadline for July 5 levels testing
19. 27-28 Premiere Animal Science Events (PASE)/Life Challenge

### July
1. All 4-H/FFA Lancaster County Fair Animal Entries Due to Extension
2. Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ....................... 6 p.m.
3. 9 All 4-H Life Challenge Contest – County-Level Junior Division . 9 a.m.
4. 10 Teen Council Meeting, Different Locations TBA ............. 3 p.m.
5. Plant Science Contests: Horticulture/Tree ID/Grass-Weed ID ....................................................... 10 a.m.–12 p.m.
6. 17-21 State 4-H Horse Show, Fonner Park, Grand Island
7. 23 Presentations Contest ..................................................... 9 a.m.
8. Horse Course Challenge ................................................... 9 a.m.

### August
1. 2-3 Entry Day for County Fair Static Exhibits, Lancaster Event Center–Lincoln Room ......................... 4 – 8 p.m.
2. 6-7 12th Annual Nebraska State Fair (4-H/FFA Exhibits & Events
3. Aug. 1-3 Lancaster County Fair, Fonner Park, Grand Island

### September
11. Teen Council Meeting ........................................................ 3 p.m.
12. 4-H Council Meeting ........................................................ 9 a.m.
13. TBA Ak-Sar-Ben 4-H Horse Show (tentative dates 17-18), Iowaco TBA
22-25 Ak-Sar-Ben 4-H Stock Show, Qwest Center, Omaha
26. Sign-Up Deadline for Oct. 1 Horse Level Testing

### October
1. Horse Level Testing, Lancaster Event Center ........................ 9 a.m.
2-8 National 4-H Week
6. Horse Awards Night ........................................................... TBA
9. Teen Council Meeting ....................................................... 3 p.m.

### November
1. 4-H Council Meeting ........................................................... 7 p.m.
13. Teen Council Meeting ........................................................ 3 p.m.

### December
6. 4-H Council Meeting ........................................................... 7 p.m.
11. Teen Council Meeting ........................................................ 3 p.m.
4-H Year in Review Video Wins National 4-H Award

The "Lancaster County 4-H 2009 Year in Review" 9-1/2-minute video was recently recognized by the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents (NAE4-HA) as the national award winner for Communicator Award – Video Program. The following Lancaster County staff contributed to the video: Vicki Jedlicka, Soni Cochran, Gary Bergman, Jim Wies, Deanna Karmazin, Tracy (Kulm) Anderson, Marty Cruickshank, Teri Hlava, and Karen Evasco. Special thanks to 4-H members Spencer Farley and Jessica Stephenson for narrating the video, and to Quentin Farley for recording the narration and providing technical advice.

The video has been shown to 4-H Kick Off, and on local public cable access. It is also on YouTube at www.youtube.com/user/4HLincolnNE.

Don Janssen Awarded Friend of 4-H

Saline County 4-H awarded Don Janssen the "Friend of 4-H Award" for 2010. For 25 years, he served as a judge of 4-H Horticulture exhibits at the Saline County Fair. Saline County 4-H thanks Don for his years of service to the youth of Saline County.

Don was an Extension Educator at UNL Extension in Lancaster County before recently retiring.

New Horticulture Educator

In December, Sarah Browning joined the UNL Extension in Lancaster County staff as horticulture extension educator.

Sarah is originally from Omaha, where she attended Benson High School.

She received a bachelor’s degree in horticulture from Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville, Mo., and a master’s degree in plant breeding from University of Nebraska–Lincoln working as part of the buffalo grass breeding program.

She has been with extension for the past 12 years, providing horticulture education for homeowners, Master Gardeners, youth, green industry professionals, and commercial vegetable growers in Dodge, Saunders, and surrounding counties.

As part of the Southeast District Acreage Team, Sarah has contributed (and will continue to contribute) to the Acreage Insights Web site, http://acreage.unl.edu and Acreage eNews monthly email newsletter (available at the above Web site). Sarah also works with other UNL horticulture educators to provide Hort Update, an email newsletter for professionals in the green industry (available at http://extensionhorticulture.unl.edu and click on "Hort Update"). She occasionally appears on Backyard Farmer.

Sarah is excited about working with clientele in Lancaster County, so please stop in and say "Hello."

New Nutrition Staff Member

Lisa Connot joined UNL Extension in Lancaster County in December as an extension assistant for the Nutrition Education Program (NEP).

Lisa’s position is part of a USDA grant funded program aimed at teaching healthy and safe food practices for limited income families.

Lisa will coordinate NEP’s School Enrichment Program for first, fourth, and fifth grades. NEP works with qualifying Lincoln elementary schools to deliver nutrition kits containing materials for hands-on educational experiences in classrooms.

Prior to coming to Lancaster County, Lisa worked with the NEP program at UNL Extension in Hall County (Grand Island). Lisa received her B.S. in Education and Human Sciences from UNL in December 2007, and is currently working toward her Master’s degree in leadership education.

NU introduces New Web Platform for Distance Education

All of the University of Nebraska’s online education programs can now be accessed at a single location thanks to the launch of a new Web platform called Online Worldwide.

Online Worldwide – www.nebraska.edu/online – offers more than 80 accredited programs, including bachelor’s and advanced degrees as well as certificates and endorsements, and more than 1,000 courses in a wide range of fields, including agriculture, biology, business, computer science, education, engineering, journalism, public administration, and many more.

By marketing all of NU’s distance programs together under one virtual “roof,” Online Worldwide will better serve Nebraskans looking to further their education and will allow the university to capture a larger share of the rapidly growing national and international market for online learning.

NU President James B. Milliken said, “Online Worldwide offers a tremendous opportunity to students who want a high-quality, affordable education from a reputable institution such as the University of Nebraska. Our distance learning endeavors have grown significantly in recent years, and I am confident that Online Worldwide will continue to increase the educational opportunities available to Nebraskans and the world around the globe.”

“More than 265,000 Nebraskans have completed some college but have not earned a degree,” he said. “Distance learning is a great solution for those Nebraskans.”

NU President James B. Milliken

It gives them a chance to become more competitive in today’s job market, increase their earning power and improve their quality of life — all while continuing to balance work, family, and other obligations.

“Furthermore, all of Nebraska benefits when we increase the educational attainment of our citizens,” Milliken added.

Demand for online learning is also growing worldwide because of the convenience of Web-based programs and the increased importance of postsecondary education in today’s knowledge-driven workforce.

According to the U.S. Census

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According to the U.S. Census
Phosphorus

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Out on new alfalfa plantings, if the soil pH is neutral (pH 6.0 to 7.0), a common practice is to apply triple the annual rate of phosphorus fertilizer and incor-
porate it into the soil prior to seeding. This should be effective for three to four years for alfalfa growth. For high lime soils, with high rates of phosphorus fixation, annual or every-other-
year broadcast applications are suggested for alfalfa.

Source: UNL Extension publication “Nutrient Management for Agronomic Crops in Nebraska” (EC-155).

Feeders

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won’t hurt the birds, but can become a nuisance in your home. If you have small quantities of bird seed, you can store it in your freezer.

6. Add bird-friendly plants to your garden. When planning next year’s flower beds, add native grasses and flowers that produce seeds birds and wildlife enjoy. Try growing Prairie coneflowers, black-eyed susans, sunflowers, goldenrods, sudan, zinnia, and grasses like Indian grass and Little Bluestem. Instead of cleaning up these plants in the fall, leave the dired seed heads for the wildlife. You’ll enjoy both the winter beauty of the plants and the variety of seeds of birds using them as food sources.

6. Refill Your Feeders Less Frequently. An empty feeder doesn’t necessarily mean hungry birds. Waiting a couple of days to refill your feeders gives birds time to feed on the seed they’ve spilled to the ground.

Commercial suet feeders are also available. If squirrels and other animals are raiding your feeders, use feeders designed to keep other wildlife out. You can

prepare your own seed mix based on what birds are visiting your backyard. Learn more about the birds in your yard and choose seed for the birds you want to attract.

9. Avoid unnecessary use of pesticides. If you feed birds year-round, let the birds do some of your pest control in the garden. Learn about integrated pest management techniques to help reduce the amount of pesticides you use.

10. Remove your feeders. As a last resort, you can remove your feeders. If you love feeding birds, this doesn’t mean you have to give up enjoying wildlife. Add a homemade bird bath, create a small shrub, plant shrubs that attract birds, make boxes out of recycled wood and materials. You can still create a bird-friendly backyard habitat even without adding bird feeders.

Suet Feeders: bore 1 inch diameter holes into a small log, fill with suet, and hang. Pinecones covered with suet and rolled in birdseed also make interesting hanging feeders. Commercial suet feeders are also available.

Tax Preparation Volunteers Needed

You can help make a real impact in your community through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA). VITA is a service where volunteers prepare free federal and state income tax returns for low-to-moderate income individuals. Through the tax program, last year over 5,000 Lincoln households received more than $6 million in refunds.

Many more taxpayers could be helped if we had more volunteers who could donate a few hours per week (usually 4-5) from Jan. 22 through April 15. The IRS provides free tax law and software training at various times in December and January. However, volunteer tax preparers will be expected to do some self-study of tax law, whether through the online course at the IRS Web site or through a course book which will be provided to them. New volunteer tax preparers are required to take a one-day-eleven class in January to learn the software used for tax preparation.

If you would like to help bring tax preparation to your community, the VITA program also needs Greeters and Administrative Assistants. There is something for everyone!

If you are interested, please contact Hannah Callahan at (402) 875-9351 or hcallahan@ communityactionatwork.org or Miriam Bede at (402) 250-2461 for additional information. Registration closes Jan. 5.

The Nebline

The Nebline is published monthly (except December). Distributed to more than 12,000 households in Lancaster County and can be read online at http://lancaster.unl.edu/nebline

The Nebline articles may be reprinted without special permission if the source is acknowledged as “University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County.” If the article contains a byline, please include the author’s name and title.

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Name ____________________________
Address ____________________________
City ____________________________ State ______ Zip ____________
Phone ____________________________

Mail to: UNL Extension in Lancaster County 444 Cherry Creek Road, Suite A • Lincoln, Nebraska 68528-1507

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All programs and events will be held at the Lancaster Extension Education Center unless otherwise noted.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Lancaster County
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Email: lancaster@unl.edu  Fax: (402) 441-7148
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Lancaster Extension Education Center Conference Facilities
444 Cherry Creek Road, Lincoln

For more information contact UNL Extension in Lancaster County at 402-441-7180.

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E X T E N S I O N C A L E N D A R

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All 4-H Career Portfolios, Scholarships, and Award Applications Due to Extension
4-H Council Meeting
Family & Community Education (FCE) and Community Leader Training Lesson, "Healthy Meal Planning on a Budget"
Extension Board Meeting
4-H Horse Stampede Entries due to Extension
Guardian/Conservator Training
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Landowners Update Meeting
4-H Office
Family & Community Education (FCE) Council Meeting
Family & Community Education (FCE) and Community Leader Training Lesson, "Healthy Meal Planning on a Budget"
2010 Outstanding 4-H Club Awards

The Lincoln Center Kiwanis Club presents Outstanding 4-H Club Awards to the top 4-H clubs participating in the Lancaster County Super Fair. There are three categories based on number of club members. One category winner is awarded the Wayne C. Farmer memorial cup as the overall Outstanding 4-H Club for the year. Clubs receive points based on all members’ total county fair exhibit and contest placings. The following clubs were recognized at a recent Lincoln Center Kiwanis meeting and also will be recognized at 4-H Achievement Night on Thursday, Feb. 10.

Star City Llamas/Alpacas 4-H Club located in the Lincoln area is the winner of Category 1 (5–7 members). The club’s seven members are enrolled in the llama/alpaca project and entered 32 total exhibits at the fair — including showmanship, obstacle course, and judging. The club is winning this award for the first time. Danetta Jensen is club leader and Peggy Steward is assistant leader.

Fantastic 4-H Club of Lincoln is the winner of Category II (8–13 members) — and winner of the Wayne C. Farmer trophy as overall Outstanding 4-H Club for the year. The club’s 11 members were enrolled in approximately 30 projects and entered 177 total exhibits at the fair — including photography, clothing, foods, home environment, citizenship, dog, sheep, swine. This is their second year as an outstanding club and second year as overall club. Jennifer Smith is club leader and Mary Hillebran and Sarah Lank Frain are assistant leaders.

South Prairie Wranglers 4-H Club of the Hickman area is the winner of Category III (13 or more members). The club’s 69 members were enrolled in more than 25 projects and entered 489 total exhibits at the fair — including horse, rabbit, dog, photography, clothing, horticulture, foods, child development, woodwork, and engineering. Several members are Clover Kids (ages 5–7). The club is winning this award for the third time. Kendra Ronnau is club leader and there are seven assistant or project leaders.

Lancaster 4-H’ers Place High at National Horse Contests

Five Lancaster County 4-H horse members represented Nebraska at the national All American Quarter Horse Youth Congress contests held recently in Columbia, Ohio. Elli Dearmont, Megan Luedtke, Bailey Peters, Cory Peters, and Hannah Ronnau qualified by winning statewide 4-H competitions earlier this year. They were coached by Kendra Ronnau.

Cory said, “The overall experience was truly amazing. All the work that it took to get this point was well worth the effort. I would like to thank everyone who helped make this opportunity possible.”

In the Youth Horse Judging Contest, the Lancaster 4-H Judging Team of Elli, Megan, Bailey, and Hannah placed 11th High Team Overall. Horse judging emphasizes how much youth know about horse conformation as they determine placings of a class of four horses. In the national contest, youth placed four halter and eight performance classes. Each contestant gave oral reasons and an explanation of their placings for specific halter and performance classes. Teams presented two halter and two performance sets of reasons.

In the Communications Contest, Cory placed 4th in the Individual Presentation Contest with his demonstration entitled “FYI on Al.” Elli and Hannah placed 2nd in the Team Presentation Contest with their demonstration entitled “Gut Reaction.”

Kendra said, “All the youth displayed maturity, responsibility, and incredible sportsmanship. Their depth of knowledge is second to none. These are tomorrow’s leaders in the industry.”

Elli said, “I gained more appreciation for the hard work and dedication that goes into preparing for competitive events. The entire experience allowed me to learn first-hand the importance of setting goals, meeting deadlines, handling pressure, and accepting criticism. I feel fortunate to have had this opportunity.”

Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council presents its annual...

Make check payable ($15/participant) to Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council and mail with registration form BY JAN. 19 to: Tracy Anderson, UNL Extension in Lancaster County, 444 Cherrycreek Rd, Suite A, Lincoln, NE 68528-1507

Overnight Lock-In for 4th & 5th graders (need not be enrolled in 4-H)

Jan. 21, 8 p.m. to Jan. 22, 8 a.m.
Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln

This year’s theme is...

Fun Projects! Games! Movies!
Snacks! Sleep Over!

Bring your sleeping bag, pillow, toothbrush, toothpaste, and a friend interested in 4-H!

Cost $15/person

Registrations due by Jan. 19

LOCK-IN REGISTRATION FORM

Make check payable ($15/participant) to Lancaster County 4-H Teen Council and mail with registration form BY JAN. 19 to: Tracy Anderson, UNL Extension in Lancaster County, 444 Cherrycreek Rd, Suite A, Lincoln, NE 68528-1507

Name of participant(s): Parent or Guardian: Age

City/State/Zip
Phone
Parent/Guardian Signature: Date:

Special Needs or Other Information (such as food allergies): yes no

I give permission to use my child’s image in photographs taken at the Lock-in in publications, news articles, advertisements or Web sites pertaining to 4-H. yes no

http://lancaster.unl.edu
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Miscellaneous