

# PANORAMA



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## A century of service

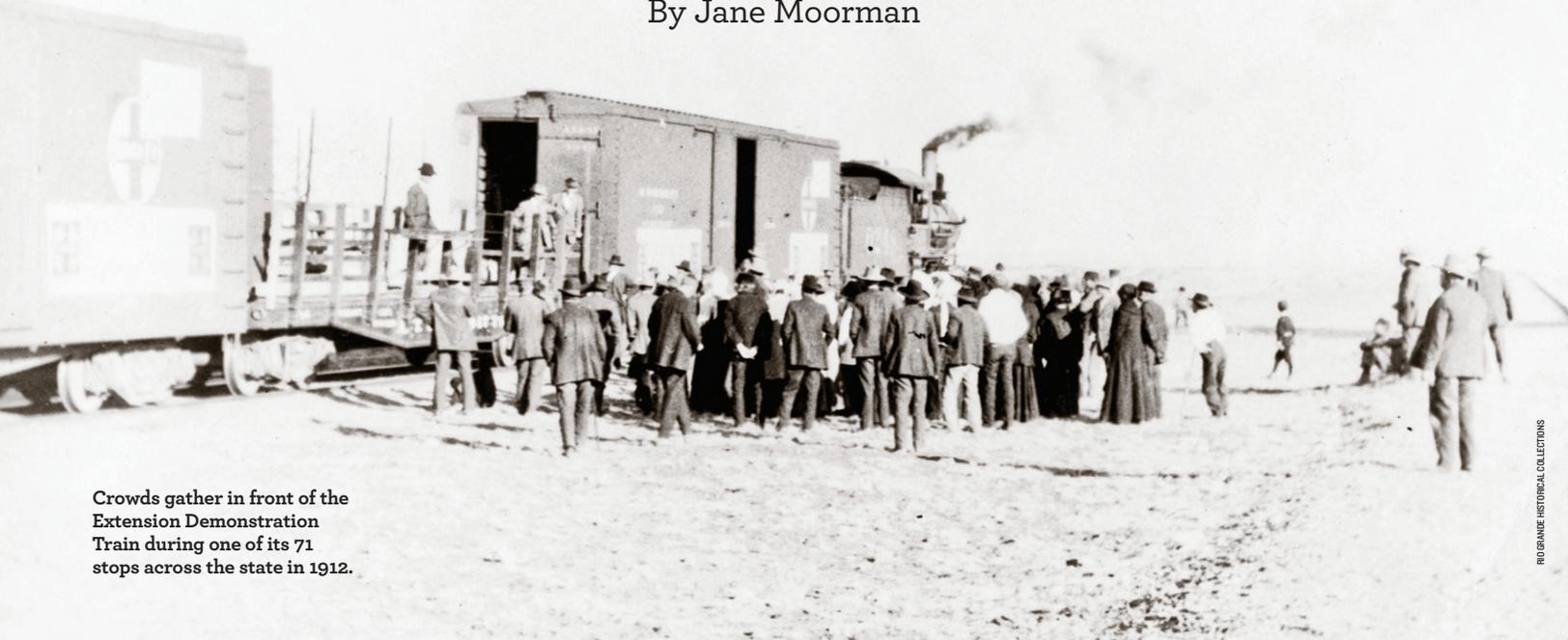
NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service delivers our land-grant university's mission to the people



# A century of service to New Mexico residents

NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service delivers our land-grant university's mission to the people

By Jane Moorman



Crowds gather in front of the Extension Demonstration Train during one of its 71 stops across the state in 1912.

ROBBIANE HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS

New Mexicans have benefited greatly from New Mexico State University's Cooperative Extension Service during the state's century of existence. From the beginning, Extension has helped residents envision a better future and given them the tools to create it.

It all began in 1862, when a bill introduced by Congressman Justin S. Morrill of Vermont was passed. The Morrill Act created the land-grant system in the United States to focus on meeting the needs of the nation's industrial class, farmers foremost among them.

"The foresight of President Abraham Lincoln and the lawmakers who supported the bill produced a powerful educational system that works because of the Extension connection," says Dean Lowell Catlett of NMSU's College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences about the law that is celebrating its sesquicentennial anniversary in 2012.

As the state's only land-grant university, NMSU's mission is to deliver research-based information and practices to the diverse population of New Mexico. The Extension Service is the mechanism that

channels the information through offices in all 33 counties, both with requests for research from the grass-roots audience and, then, returning with the information to resolve the issue.

Through the years this has been accomplished many ways, starting with the Extension Demonstration Train carrying the earliest Extension programs from the New Mexico College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts to more than 10 percent of the population of the new state of New Mexico in 1912.

The mission of the Extension Service was established by federal law in 1914's Smith-Lever Act to take education from the land-grant universities to rural communities, increasing agricultural production and improving the quality of life. As the United States' social awareness evolved in the 1960s, the role of Extension grew to include reaching out to low-income audiences, wherever they live, to help improve their lives.

"The key to the Extension Service's success in New Mexico, and nationwide, stems from the relationships the county agents have with their community mem-

bers. They know and understand the people's needs," Catlett says.

While the impact of agricultural research is measurable, the economic benefit of Extension is immeasurable, according to Catlett, an agricultural economist.

"We don't know how to quantify the impact of the knowledge that the Extension agents deliver to the people in their communities," he says. "The multiplier for economic impact of agricultural research is staggering. For every dollar invested into the research there is roughly a \$50 return. That is compared to most multipliers for a community activity that produces two to three dollars for every dollar paid for a job created in a community."

During the inaugural year of New Mexico's statehood, the Demonstration Train made 71 stops in 16 days where lecturers from the fledgling Extension program presented progressive farming techniques to the men, women and children who greeted the train. New Mexico was entering a new era as the Homestead Act, the arrival of the railroad, and the military presence in the territory all had a significant



Doña Ana County farmers inspect a field in the early days of the Cooperative Extension Service.



Cooperative Extension Service agents demonstrate a sheep inspection with visitors from Mexico.



Mary B. Richardson, state home demonstration leader, shows how to cook with steam pressure at home in 1920.

role in bringing people to the semi-arid environment.

“The settlers had to adapt to an environment unlike that of the Midwest, South and East,” says Kathy Treat, retired assistant Extension director and Extension history researcher. “Land was abundant, but water was limited. Agricultural practices from back east did not apply to New Mexico. There was a great need for education to help the settlers adapt.”

Through the decades, the Extension Service has held a position of high regard in the communities as the agents helped cattlemen adhere to federal mandates during the Dust Bowl; vouched for the quality of local producers’ operations when they were seeking loans; formed boys and girls clubs to teach life skills through agricultural and home economic projects; organized women into gardening and canning clubs during the Depression; and kept farmers and ranchers up to date on improved practices and helped them with developing long-term plans for improving their farms and ranches, homes and communities.

With the development of mass communication from radio to television to computers and the Internet, today Extension has become highly visible and more accessible to the public. Hundreds of how-to publications are available at the county Extension offices or via the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences website, including the Desert Blooms horticulture website.

“Issues have changed over the years, but the need to extend research-based information out to the state remains constant,” says Jon C. Boren, director of NMSU’s Cooperative Extension Service. “With local needs at the forefront, we develop educational programs in a number of ways – public presentations, workshops, demonstrations, publications and through the media. Today, we use the Internet, interactive video and satellite broadcast technologies, bringing knowledge directly to your home and community.”

Agriculture is the cornerstone of Extension. The information shared by the agricultural agents ranges from good agricultural practices for farmers and ranchers, to urban horticulture shared through 750 Master Gardener volunteers in 15 counties.

Annually hundreds of thousands of New Mexicans access agricultural information from the Extension service.

Providing specialized expertise to the agricultural agents and the general population are the Extension specialists who share their wealth of knowledge in the areas of energy and water, farm and ranch, livestock and crops, natural resources, and yard and garden. Technical assistance comes through the soil, water and agricultural testing laboratories and the plant diagnostic clinic.

The Rural Agricultural Improvement and Public Affairs Project honors an 800-year tradition of farming in Northern New Mexico by striving to help minority family-owned farms and ranches to prosper.

The Southern Great Plains Dairy Consortium is an Extension Service program composed of specialists working to ensure long-term sustainability of the dairy industry in New Mexico.

The Range Improvement Task Force helps improve the quality of decisions made about natural resource management of public and private lands by providing sound, scientific information to ranchers, land managers, agency officials and policy makers.

“Extension is more than helping the agricultural industry. It is about helping families have a quality life and helping the economic development of the state,” Boren says.

Through the Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Department, county home economists and Extension specialists reach 180,000 citizens annually through community classes and workshops on nutrition, parenting and physical fitness.

Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition – reaching 9,000 adults and 15,500 children annually – teaches low-income families how to make healthy food choices, improve food preparation skills and develop food buying strategies with their limited incomes.

Kitchen Creations is a four-week cooking school in 57 locations giving 1,076 diabetic adults and their families diet ideas and suggestions.

Baby’s First Wish, Nurturing Parenting, Strengthening Families Initiative, Family Wellness and Incarcerated Fathers are programs that build healthy family relationships by teaching life and parenting skills including nurturing, conflict resolution and effective discipline skills.

Organ Wise Guys, Just Be It! Healthy

& Fit, Family Wellness, Fit Families, Keep Moving Keep Healthy with Diabetes and Strong Women Strong Bones are programs focused on healthy lifestyles for all ages. Organ Wise Guys and Just Be It! Healthy & Fit are programs delivered in elementary and intermediate schools to increase students' knowledge of nutrition and physical fitness.

Another way the Extension Service helps the state's community is through NM EDGE, a program designed to provide a comprehensive course of study to administrators and managers in local, state, tribal and national government, through which participants can acquire and apply the best practices and theory to their management behaviors and strategies using the highest professional standards.

During the first year of operation under the Smith-Lever Act, New Mexico organized 71 boys and girls clubs and garnered attendance at 685 meetings, equivalent to 10 percent of the population.

Today the 4-H Youth Development program provides appropriate development opportunities for 68,000 young people to learn and experience life skills, practice them and be able to use them throughout a lifetime. There are more than 200 activity projects for members to participate in local clubs where parents are the leaders.

Other Extension youth outreach programs offered today include YES Camp, Tribal Extension, Las Vegas Memorial Middle School Agricultural Center, New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp and school agriculture days.

Youth Entrepreneurship Summer Camp is a college course for high school students where students learn financial strategy, market research and entrepreneurship.

Tribal Extension programs deliver community-based education programs that revitalize agriculture, implement culturally appropriate youth leadership programs and strengthen the bonds between individual, families and community. Tribal cultures and language are incorporated in presentations whether for adults or young people.

At Las Vegas Memorial Middle School Agricultural Extension and Education Center students learn about agriculture through hands-on experience in a traditional classroom setting, labs and a greenhouse.

New Mexico Youth Ranch Management Camp allows youth ages 15-19 to

attend a week-long camp at the Valles Caldera National Preserve. They are taught about raising quality beef, managing rangeland and wildlife habitat and ways to market their cattle. The campers demonstrate the wealth of knowledge they have gained in a ranch management plan competition at the end of the week.

Kids, Kows & More program is a one-day field trip showing students and teachers where the food they eat and the fiber they wear come from and the resources it takes to produce them. Students learn about pecans, wildlife, chile, soil conservation, bee keeping and cotton. They watch a live cow being milked in the Southwest Dairy Farmers Association mobile dairy classroom.

Progressive Agriculture Safety Day teaches students safety procedures while

at home or on a farm or ranch through hands-on activities during a one-day field trip event.

Through the years Cooperative Extension Service faculty have worked with business people, growers, livestock producers, foresters, youth and community leaders.

"The agents see first-hand what's working and what's not working in their communities," Boren says. "With direction from their local advisory boards, Extension faculty collaborate with scientists at NMSU, where the research is focused on the real issues important to our clientele. Results from that research circles back to the community through Extension programs. Knowledge grows from this cycle of reaching out and engaging the people who use it."

## Extension publications leap into e-books

New Mexico State University is taking the lead among land-grant universities in converting Extension publications into e-books. Last summer, Ana Henke, Extension/Experiment Station publications supervisor, served on a panel discussion at the Association for Communication Excellence/National Extension Technology Conference in Denver. As a result, she has been asked to conduct a how-to webinar for other universities.

NMSU is among the first in the country to convert Extension publications to e-books. Dozens of books are now online and available for download with new publications posted regularly. The plan is to convert the last two years of Extension publications into Web, PDF and e-books formats while producing future publications the same way.

"Our goal in producing these e-books was to make available useful information in a mobile format that would permit a farmer in the field to read about crop diseases, or perhaps someone at

home in their kitchen can use their iPad or Kindle to follow instructions to make cinnamon rolls," Henke says.

Currently, Extension e-books are available in these topic areas: agronomy, livestock and range, clothing, food and nutrition, family resource management, horticulture and health.

"The nice thing about Extension publications is that they expire every five years. As we are learning more about this changing technology, I can see e-books we're publishing right now becoming interactive versions in five years," she says.

To access these publications, go to <http://aces.nmsu.edu/pubs/ebooks/welcome.html>. Download instructions are provided on the website. New publications are posted frequently.

"Being able to provide our publications in this new and exciting format is just another way that Extension continues to provide useful information to New Mexicans," she says.

*Minerva Baumann*

