

## History of the Cooperative Extension Service

The roots of Extension go deep in American history. The concept that all people can benefit from education is a great part of the tradition of free America. Founding fathers, such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, developed agricultural societies that provided educational opportunities for farmers and industrial workers. They aided in creating social, political and economic climates encouraging citizens to learn and apply their knowledge. These agricultural societies were influential in the passage of legislation in 1862, permitting the establishment of Colleges of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts in all states. In 1887, Agricultural Experiment Stations were authorized and the Cooperative Extension Service was established in 1914 by the Smith-Lever Act.

### **Purpose and Scope**

A County Extension Office is the off-campus arm of Montana State University, and it transmits information on many subjects from research centers and Universities to the public. It helps people interpret the information and encourages the application of it to the solution of problems. Extension is people-oriented and encourages widespread participation of local people, regardless of race, sex, creed, color, handicap or national origin. The major function of the Extension Service is to provide informal adult and youth education, to help people help themselves. It is education for action, directed at helping people solve problems they encounter from day to day, and the needs of people for a better life. The problems of man, involving his community, home and children are the concern of the Extension Service.

### **Financing**

The Extension Service is financed by Federal, State, and county funds. As a general policy, Montana counties provide funds for the operation of the county office, plus a contribution toward the salary of the County Agents. State and Federal funds are used for operation of the State office, including salaries, travel, and supplies. A portion of each County Agent's salary is also paid from State and Federal funds.

### **Duties and Responsibilities of County Staff**

Education is the basic job of County Extension Agents and Assistants. As educators, they represent Montana State University and the United States Department of Agriculture. They live in the county and are in daily contact with its rural people as well as those in urban areas. They become aware of the social and economic changes that affect the lives of the local people. The County Agents provide organizational structure and programs to meet changing economic and social needs.

### **The County Extension Agents have the following responsibilities:**

1. To maintain an office where people can get information and counsel on problems of agriculture, home economics, urban horticulture and related fields.
2. To work with local people in planning and implementing long-range educational programs.
3. To develop local leaders by providing encouragement, training, and the opportunity to gain leadership experiences.
4. To disseminate factual information in appropriate subject matter areas to the people by all available methods.
5. To maintain good working relationships with all other agencies and organizations that contribute to social and economic development in the county.
6. To keep accurate records and use them for evaluating the effectiveness of their work.

### **Subject Matter Specialists**

University Specialists are the link between the many sources of information (including new research), and the County Agent and his/her clientele. Each Specialist is responsible for providing leadership in the Extension educational program relating to his subject matter field and assist the County Extension Agent and the local people in identifying and analyzing problems. Specialists help plan educational programs and provide informational support on the subject of their specialty. The success of the Montana Extension Service has, in large measure, been due to the dedication and high standards of performance of the men and women on the field staff.

We are here for the people of Montana, "With Education & Research working for you".