Literacy starts before school

With a quarter of Nevada’s population having inadequate literacy skills, Cooperative Extension teamed up with KNPB-TV, Washoe County Libraries and Washoe County School District to address the issue at the best time — during the preschool years.

Family Storyteller reaches young children when they’re developing the skills and attitudes to help them be successful. It also reaches parents; however, some parents have low literacy skills as well. One way to break the cycle is to increase the amount and quality of time parents and children read together.

The program includes a six-week series of parent-child workshops where parents are guided through reading and literacy activities with their children. They receive free books and materials to complete the activities at home. Chris Barnard, university student intern who conducts some of the workshops, says, “The parents feel they can be more creative when reading to their children. It helps them prioritize their daily routine. They stop and read for five or ten minutes when their kids want to read.”

In 2000, Cooperative Extension conducted Family Storyteller workshops at 12 Washoe County sites, with 234 families participating.

According to program directors Pat Behal and Dan Weigel, the results reveal significant increases in:

- The number of times the parent and child read together
- The number of days the child asks to be read to
- The number of days the child looks at books or magazines alone, and
- The enjoyment the parent receives reading with the child, and vice versa.

Family Storyteller is expanding to include a 16-week pilot program designed for English as a Second Language families at the Northern Nevada Literacy Council. These workshops will better prepare ESL parents to help their preschoolers succeed.

Sheila Yoder gives children a jump-start in preschool by reading to daughter Haley and Joey Canaday at a Family Storyteller session in Sun Valley.
Don’t despair... Master Gardeners are here

Western Nevada’s challenging soil and arid, temperamental climate are not exactly a gardener’s dream. Get some moral support and advice from the experts - Cooperative Extension’s Master Gardeners.

These citizens volunteered more than 13,000 hours in 2000, helping neighbors keep their lawns healthy, grow luscious garden vegetables and choose trees and plants that can flourish in our climate. Even those who just dabble in gardening come in with a pesky weed or a bug in a jar for the Master Gardeners to identify.

They cheerfully identify the problem and recommend an effective, safe treatment to eliminate invasive weeds or unwanted, detrimental critters. They perform soil tests and let you know what amendments you need to grow healthier plants. They know all about planting and pruning... watering and weeding... and then some. If it grows in western Nevada, a Master Gardener knows how to grow it and what to do with it.

How do they know? They’ve completed 40 hours of classroom training and 40 hours of hands-on community service, as part of the education offered by Cooperative Extension in Reno, Carson City, Gardnerville and Incline Village. They donate thousands of hours to community projects such as beautifying Reno’s Pioneer Theatre, planting memorial gardens, and growing and donating food for the area’s hungry. They maintain demonstration gardens, and hold free seminars and presentations on topics such as how to make your own compost or grow your own grapes. With the latest research from Cooperative Extension’s horticulturists, you can be sure Master Gardeners are armed with the knowledge to help western Nevada grow just a little greener.

Rapid growth calls for bilingual landscape training

With rapid growth in western Nevada, the need for well-trained landscape professionals is critical, and many are primarily Spanish speaking. In response, Cooperative Extension offers its Bilingual Landscape Workshops.

The programs are offered each spring on tree and landscape maintenance, irrigation and turf management. The classes are taught in both English and Spanish. The workshops, available in Reno and Carson City, are well attended. A survey of participants in the 2000 course reveals the respondents are “more confident in their workmanship. With better workmanship, fewer problems with customers and the environment occur.

In addition, Spanish-speaking participants say that taking the course helps to improve their English skills.

Other program sponsors include Ewing Irrigation, International Professional Development Services, Nevada Landscape Association, Nevada Division of Forestry and USDA Forest Service.

Take the guesswork out of watering your lawn!

If today is your watering day, water for a total of:

Log on to www.extension.unr.edu and WATER LIKE THE PROS!

You’ll find an illustration showing how long you should water your lawn, according to current weather conditions and your sprinklers.

For more information:

Call Cooperative Extension’s Bill Carlos, (775) 784-4848.

Frustrated trying to garden in northern Nevada?

No need to throw in the “trowel”...

Call University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s Master Gardeners and horticulture staff:

Reno: (775) 784-4848
Incline Village: (775) 832-4150
Carson City: (775) 887-2252
Douglas County: (775) 782-9960

Or “Ask a Master Gardener” at mastergardeners@unce.unr.edu
All known tall whitetop infestations in the Tahoe Basin treated

A whopping 100 percent of known tall whitetop infestations at Tahoe have been sprayed or pulled with the help of Weed Warriors and other volunteers and collaborating agencies, reports Sue Donaldson, Cooperative Extension water specialist.

Furthermore, they witnessed an 80 percent decrease in plant regrowth in Incline Village; a 75 percent decrease occurred in El Dorado County. "We have a unique opportunity to nip this invasion in the bud," said Donaldson.

Other tall whitetop demonstration and eradication projects were successful in western Nevada:

- **Wasco Valley.** Ninety percent of weed reduction is expected in 2001 in a Scripps Wildlife Refuge plot. For the first time, a coordinated educational approach reached all valley residents.
- **Carson City.** Half the plants were controlled after the first spray at the Railroad Museum; reseeding with beneficial plants will occur in winter 2001.
- **Douglas County.** Cooperative Extension's Steve Lewis worked with the local weed district supervisor to map and treat more than 100 acres of the invader.

In 1999, the Nevada State Legislature asked Cooperative Extension to lead a two-year initiative to enhance public education and control the weed. "We made a substantial start in raising public awareness of this threat and motivating people to get involved in identification and eradication activities," said Karen Hinton, Cooperative Extension dean and director.

With the help of local citizens and groups, Cooperative Extension mapped and sprayed or pulled hundreds of acres of weeds statewide and nearly tripled the legislature's initial investment through donated time, funds and equipment. The "Tall whitetop: It's NOT just a pretty face" campaign resulted in numerous weed sightings and enhanced weed awareness through media exposure.

For more information, log on: www.nce.unr.edu/tallwhitetop/ or call (775) 784-7070 for a copy of the Tall Whitetop Initiative 2001 Report.

Cooperative Extension pitches in to preserve Lake Tahoe

It's no secret that Lake Tahoe's famed clarity is declining rapidly – at the rate of one foot each year. In 2000, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension led the charge to coordinate and strengthen educational efforts by forming an umbrella group, the Lake Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition (LTEEC). In spring 2001, Cooperative Extension teamed with University of California Cooperative Extension to fund an educational coordinator — a positive step to collaborate and preserve the lake's water quality.

LTEEC, a group of more than 15 organizations, educates the public on how to prevent pollution of the lake. Their eight working groups assist homeowners in controlling erosion and runoff from landscapes; engage citizens in volunteer conservation, restoration and monitoring projects; help K-12 teachers integrate environmental education into the classroom; educate visitors and businesses; and work with firefighters to coordinate fireescape messages.

Cooperative Extension continues its role in educating basin residents to adopt environmentally friendly property management practices through workshops and other programs using the Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity (see right). In 2000, more than 5,000 copies of the manual were distributed through personal contacts.

For more information, call Heather Segale, environmental education coordinator, (775) 832-4150, or segaleh@unce.unr.edu

Get your copy of Cooperative Extension's Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity

- Design a landscape to meet your needs
- Control erosion and protect water quality
- Maintain native vegetation
- Improve wildlife habitat
- Nurture new plants
- Improve your soil
- Irrigate efficiently
- Choose plants for beauty and functionality
- Protect your home from wildfire by using defensible space
- Minimize pesticide use with Integrated Pest Management

Call John Cobourn, Cooperative Extension water resource specialist, (775) 832-4150
All aboard for Steamboat Creek... and the Truckee

If you think Steamboat Creek’s water woes don’t affect you, think again. Steamboat Creek is the most polluted tributary to the Truckee River, impacting our water quality and ability to enjoy the river for its beauty and recreational purposes.

Cooperative Extension Water Quality Education Specialist Sue Donaldson educates property owners about eroding banks, animal waste, chemicals from over-fertilization and over-watering, poorly planned land development, invasive weeds and improperly functioning septic systems that contribute to the creek’s high quantities of nitrogen and phosphorus.

A first-time Steamboat Creek Watershed Conference was held in February 2001 by Cooperative Extension and the Washoe-Storey Conservation District. About 150 citizens learned more about the stream’s troubles and what they could do to help. Sponsors included Nevada Division of Environmental Protection, Nevada Mining Association, Sierra Pacific and Port of Subs, along with other businesses.

After the conference, participants created Volunteer Stream Watchers. Resident Lynn Mundt coordinates a voice mail system where people report stream pollution or activities that may harm local streams. Mundt contacts agencies and individuals to fix the problem or stop the activity. Volunteer Gayle Van Bemmell spearheads a Good Conservation Practices Awards Program to recognize property owners, contractors and developers who protect riparian areas.

In spring 2001, Donaldson led the annual Pulling Together for Steamboat Creek event to clear the tall whitetop weed, thus preventing erosion and sediment from entering the creek. Since volunteer Tim Hunter started pulling near Hidden Valley, a mile-long stretch has been cleared and beneficial native vegetation is taking hold.

Watch for the summer 2001 Invasive Species campaign

Watch for the summer 2001 kick-off of a public-education campaign urging people to “be on the lookout” and report sightings of invasive species. These non-native weeds, insects and plant diseases — the yellow starthistle and red imported fire ant, to name just a few — are raising havoc with the environment, economy and public health. The multi-agency effort, including Cooperative Extension, consists of TV public service announcements, stand-up posters and bookmarks, as well as a website:

www.invaders.nv.blm.gov

Cooperative Extension takes the leadership in helping clean up polluted waters in Steamboat Creek.

Cooperative Extension and the conservation district stabilized and bioengineered a thousand feet of eroding creek bank. “The willows we planted to stabilize the banks sprouted and are progressing nicely,” Donaldson says of the restoration project.

Donaldson also produces publications that guide property owners on best management practices for the health of their properties and surrounding riparian areas. To obtain a copy of the Small Ranch Manual or receive the Small Ranch Water Quality News, contact her at (775) 784-4848, or donaldsons@unce.unr.edu

If you live by Steamboat Creek or another stream or river...

here are things you can do to help protect our water quality and environment:

- Keep litter, pet wastes, leaves and debris out of roadside ditches, storm drains and the creeks
- Pump your septic tank regularly, on average every three years
- Fertilize lawns only when needed, using the correct amounts according to directions
- Prevent livestock from lounging in the creek
- Control soil erosion on your property by planting ground cover and stabilizing erosion-prone areas

Call Sue Donaldson, Cooperative Extension (775) 784-4848
Storey County 4-H youth promote wildfire awareness

Storey County’s 4-H Comstock Coyotes may not be out on the front lines fighting wildfires, but they’re fighting fires just the same – on the home front. The 4-H’ers joined forces with Virginia City businesses and a local wildfire awareness and prevention group, the Fire Safe Highlands. This group, led by Cooperative Extension Community Development Specialist Marlene Rebori, educates citizens on wildfire danger and prevention.

Sandy Wallin, Cooperative Extension’s Storey County 4-H coordinator, arranged for the youth to receive instruction on poster art and design, and wildfire education from the Fire Safe Highlands. Each 4-H member will then create a wildfire prevention poster to be sponsored and displayed by a Virginia City business. At the end of the fire season, the posters will be exhibited at an art show and contest.

Together, the 4-H Comstock Coyotes, Virginia City businesses and the Fire Safe Highlands hope to minimize the threat of wildfire and loss of lives and property from wildfires in their community.

Living with Fire... a Nevada reality

Living with fire sounds like an absurd proposition, but in Nevada it’s a reality. Our windy, hot summers, steep slopes and canyons, and dry, flammable vegetation guarantee wildfires will ravage hundreds of thousand of acres. In 1999, a record-breaking 1.6 million acres burned in Nevada; in 2000, more than 600,000 acres were consumed.

“Wildfires will always occur in Nevada,” says Cooperative Extension Natural Resource Specialist Ed Smith. “The key is to carry out pre-fire activities so loss of lives and property is minimized.”

Smith works with the Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators and other firefighting agencies to make vegetation recommendations and educate homeowners on what they can do to better protect themselves and their property from wildfire.

Smith’s Living With Fire homeowner’s guide has been widely distributed in Nevada, 12 other states and Canada. He conducts workshops for homeowners, landscapers and contractors, and educates people through radio, television and billboards.

Smith and Extension Educator Steve Lewis partnered with local agencies and businesses in Douglas County to create the Compost Your Combustibles program. Each spring and fall, homeowners gather dry, flammable vegetation from around their homes and take it to a nearby drop-off spot, where it’s chipped and taken to Full Circle Compost for recycling.

Living With Fire efforts are paying off. Firefighters on the front lines in 2000 were able to save a number of homes because the owners had created defensible space and adopted other pre-fire recommendations.

“We have some of the best firefighters in the nation,” says Smith. “They put their lives on the line for us, but the responsibility of protecting our homes from wildfire is really ours! The things we do before a fire occurs are most important.”

Don’t miss the television special “Nevada Burning” on KOLO-TV Channel 8

Monday, Aug. 20 at 8 p.m.
Sunday, Sept. 9 at 4 p.m.
Saturday, Oct. 6 at 4:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Cooperative Extension, Bureau of Land Management, Nevada Division of Forestry and Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators to help Nevadans save lives and property.

Help your home survive a wildfire

- Use fire-resistant roof and building materials
- Reduce dry wildland vegetation around your home
- Create a fire-safe landscape
- Clearly post your address
- Provide easy access to your home

Call now for your free copy!

Ed Smith,
Cooperative Extension natural resource specialist
(775) 782-9960

Or, log on: www.extension.unr.edu/FIRE/Front Page.html

Wildfire rages at C-Hill in Carson City in 1998.

Photo by Dave Hill
Coalition uses media to teach teens, "Calcium, it’s not J UST milk"

When six teenage girls from Reno's Fred Traner Middle School went over to KWNZ radio, they had no idea they'd have so much fun or learn so much. These members of a middle school technology class taped their own radio commercials, telling other youth about good sources of calcium and how it prevents osteoporosis in later years. “It’s good to help people who don’t understand that it’s not just milk that has calcium,” said Jocelyn Seemann. Her classmate Tiarra Calkins remarked, “Now I watch what I eat.”

This hands-on approach was combined with five one-hour calcium lessons taught in science classes at Traner and J.D. Smith Middle School in North Las Vegas. The program - aimed at increasing consumption of low-fat calcium-rich food among youth, particularly adolescent females - is sponsored by Cooperative Extension, the College of Human and Community Sciences and the Nevada Nutrition Network, a statewide group of public and private partners.

Has the program worked? Cooperative Extension Nutritionist Jamie Benedict reports that, among 543 middle school students who participated in 2000, the program resulted in positive changes in their knowledge, attitudes and behavior toward calcium-rich foods.

Students who knew the most about calcium sources had a significantly higher intake of the target foods.

“Further,” adds Nutritionist Mary Spoon, “we believe the media campaign helped reinforce information shared with students in the classroom.” Forty-four percent of youth surveyed had heard the radio ads; 58 percent reported seeing the billboards (in the Truckee Meadows) and bus stop shelter posters (in the Las Vegas Valley).

Students also had opportunities to sample calcium-rich foods like string cheese and yogurt. “The tasting events were probably the most popular part of the program,” observed Benedict. “Some of the students were surprised to find they actually liked these nutritious foods.”

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**How do you choose childcare for your children?**

**What can you do to create safe spaces for children and those working with children?**

Call Cooperative Extension’s Jackie Reilly, youth development specialist, (775) 784-4848, or log on [www.extension.unr.edu](http://www.extension.unr.edu) to download FREE publications:

- Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting: A self-study guide for people working with children
- Caring 4 Kids Training Modules available on-line at [www.nce.unr.edu/caring4kids/caring4kids](http://www.nce.unr.edu/caring4kids/caring4kids). (Training counts toward caregiver training hours required by the state)
- What is Child Abuse?
- Recognizing Child Abuse and Neglect
- Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect
- Be Choosy About Child Care
- Checklist for Family Day Care Homes
- Checklist for Child Care Centers
- Creating Safety Zones for Child Care Providers
- When You Feel Like Lashing Out
- Responding to a Disclosure of Child Abuse

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**Need some help with community and organizational development?**

Cooperative Extension offers:

- Board development
- Strategic planning/visioning
- Facilitation
- Conflict management
- Meeting management
- Public and natural resource issues education
- Goal setting
- Action planning
- Collaboration
- Consensus building
- Leadership development
- Interest-based negotiation

**Call**

Marlene Rebori, (775) 784-4848
or Steve Lewis, (775) 782-9960
Cooperative Extension
Bringing the University to You

Visit our website:
www.nce.unr.edu

What is Cooperative Extension?

Our Purpose
We’re the outreach college that extends knowledge from the University of Nevada – and other land-grant universities – to local communities to address issues. We are a federal-state-county partnership with 17 offices throughout the state. Our more than 200 personnel – with the help of volunteers – deliver non-degree educational programs based on local needs. In 2000, Cooperative Extension made more than 400,000 face-to-face contacts with community citizens.

Our Program Areas
- Agriculture
- Community Development
- Health and Nutrition
- Horticulture and Natural Resources
- Human and Family Development

Our Mission
To discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of people.

Cooperative Extension publications
To access our more than 300 on-line publications, log on: www.nce.unr.edu/pubs.html

Help us make a difference!
If you would like to support Cooperative Extension programs, here’s how you can help:
- Sponsor a project
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- Introduce us to new funding sources

Contact Bobbi Lazzarone, development and public relations director; at (775) 784-4378, or lazzeroneb@unce.unr.edu. Your assistance can help us expand our programs to benefit more people.
4-H - Skating with the times

“Before we got the idea for the skate club, we thought 4-H was just dogs and livestock,” said 14-year-old Ryan Bauer. “Now we’ve found out about a lot of other 4-H clubs.” Ryan is a member of the 4-H Carson Skate Club, a group of in-line skaters, as well as skateboarders.

This new skate club is one of many innovative clubs that Cooperative Extension’s 4-H program is pioneering. “4-H is more far-reaching than just agriculture. It’s more urbanized now,” explains Becky Beisenstein, the club’s leader.

Beisenstein started the club to help her son, Vince Cramer, age 14, and other skaters find places to skate and improve their image in the community. “People thought we were out to cause trouble, but we just wanted to have fun and skate,” says Cramer. His friend Steve McMartin, age 14, adds, “A teen baseball team can walk into a pizza parlor and be treated decently, but skaters aren’t seen in the same light.”

Now Cramer says being part of the 4-H Carson Skate Club is helping. “They look at us differently now because we’re with 4-H and they figure we’re okay and being supervised.”

Beisenstein recognizes it’s more than that. “I think it’s helping them with their manners. It’s getting them to respect other people and other people to understand and respect them.” The members are getting permission to skate certain places and go on field trips to find more challenging skating places.

The club members want to recruit younger kids. “They’re anxious to teach some other kids,” says Beisenstein. “They want them to enjoy the sport as much as they do.” Bauer said teaching new members has helped him develop leadership skills. “It’s really frustrating at first, but once they get it, it’s really cool. It feels good.”

Kids need real heroes. In fact, a recent guideline suggests children need at least three to five caring adults in their lives. You only hope they find heroes like Lee Deburle, one of Cooperative Extension’s 4-H After School Club teachers. “I love being with kids. I like being the mentor these children are looking for. It’s important for children in this age group to have someone to talk to, someone who cares and is open to them,” he says.

It’s no wonder that a nine-year-old student in the club at Bernice Mathews Elementary School nominated Deburle for the “Isuzu After-school Hero of the Year.” In her nomination she wrote, “I had a lot of fun with Mr. Lee. He helped me with my homework every day. He brought a dictionary and helped me find words I didn’t know. With his help, I did better on my homework.”

In November 2000, Deburle was chosen one of 24 western regional winners of the award. The club was awarded a computer and Deburle received $1,000. “He spent the cash on books for the kids,” said Sarah Chvilicek, Cooperative Extension youth coordinator. “Lee is completely dedicated to helping young people improve their lives. He has a passion for not only helping children learn academic fundamentals, but also helping them learn integrity.”

The clubs are conducted at three elementary schools and three Reno Housing Authority sites. Youth participate in activities that develop and enhance personal strengths, resiliency, reading, math, science, self-responsibility, decision making, cooperation and communication skills. The results? A significant improvement in reading grades of kindergarten through second-grade participants, and increased social skills in all grade levels of participants.