2004 HIGHLIGHTS
Message from the Dean

Karen Hinton

In this report you will find many examples of the partnerships that exist between University of Nevada Cooperative Extension and individuals, agencies and organizations throughout our state. Our faculty and staff live and work in Nevada communities where they identify needs and target programs to respond to local concerns. As they develop educational responses to issues, they team with others to produce quality programs with lasting results.

Our partnerships with funding agencies serve to combine resources for greater impact. Teaming with organizations helps to focus goals on important issues and bring synergy to planning and actions. Colleagues on campus connect their expertise to local issues through linkages that Cooperative Extension has with Nevada citizens. These multiple forms of partnerships enrich our programs and expand the opportunities for the university to reach citizens with a diverse array of programs.

As we celebrate 90 years of Cooperative Extension in Nevada, we are still committed to the original land-grant goal of serving the educational needs of citizens. The programs in this report are examples of how we work collaboratively with others to achieve this goal. We are pleased to share these examples of programs that reach citizens across the state — in both rural and urban communities — including youth and adults, and covering a wide range of important issues.

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Our purpose

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) is the college that extends knowledge from the University of Nevada to local communities to address important issues. Our more than 200 faculty and staff, with the help of 3,000-plus volunteers, conduct informal educational programs in every Nevada county through 18 statewide offices.

Our program areas

• Agriculture
• Community Development
• Health and Nutrition
• Horticulture
• Human and Family Development
• Natural Resources

Our mission

To discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of people.
Brian Sandoval has always been a high achiever, say his family and life-long friends. Diligent...persevering...leader...these are the qualities that describe Nevada’s Attorney General. At age 60, he’s had a distinguished career as a lawyer, legislator, member of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board and chairman of the Nevada Gaming Commission. But Sandoval says the foundation of his career was built during his 4-H experience.

“4-H was really the cornerstone of my life,” said Sandoval during an interview in his Reno office complex. “I don’t think people realize how much you learn when you work with animals. I went into 4-H painfully shy and came out with confidence, speaking skills, organizational abilities, business acumen and an empathy for the rural life I still have today.”

Brian Sandoval and his brother Ron remember their first ewes, squirming on their laps in their dad’s ’69 Impala as they returned to their small Sparks farm. “When those boys first joined my Beef, Sheep and Swine Club,” recalled 4-H Leader Sonja Johnson, “they didn’t know a thing about animals. But they were competent in keeping records and before you knew it, they had a herd and Brian was president of the club.”

While other kids played baseball, the Sandovalos watered, fed, delivered newborns, cradled the bummers, gave shots and sheared lambs weighing more than they did.

“All that taught us financial responsibility, a good work ethic and I think it helped me become a better scientist,” said Ron Sandoval, a veterinarian at the Barings Boulevard Veterinary Hospital in Sparks. “We went to 4-H Camp every summer, a great experience for a couple of rural school boys who didn’t know many kids. It opened up a whole new group of friends, whom we still see as adults.”

One friend is Reno businessman Mark Nason, who was a camp counselor with Brian. “4-H is about character building,” he noted. “It helps kids from diverse locations, families and abilities belong to a team. I found Brian to be a natural leader who made other people feel good, and who was just as gracious when things didn’t go his way as when they did.”

Brian bought his first car with proceeds from the Sandoval sheep business, which also funded his education at the University of Nevada. He and his wife, Kathleen Tepiner Sandoval, live on an acre of land with a sheep barn ready for action when their son James and daughter Madeline join 4-H.

Nevada Attorney General Brian Sandoval reminisces about his 4-H experience. (Below, left: Brian Sandoval, as a 4-H youth, demonstrates his sheep project.)

4-H IS MORE THAN YOU EVER IMAGINED!

• In 2003, 4-H programs reached more than 63,000 Nevada youth, a 17% increase over 2002, with the help of more than 2,800 adult and youth volunteers.

• 4-H youth, ages 6 to 18, learn life skills in clubs, camps, after-school programs, community center projects, home study sessions and school enrichment programs.

• Program offerings range from animal science to nutrition, leadership development and high-technology communication.

Nearly 200 4-H alumni, leaders, youth and friends gathered on the shores of the State 4-H Camp at Lake Tahoe in October 2003 for the first statewide Nevada 4-H Reunion. The attendees had, collectively, more than 1,000 years of 4-H membership, representing youth education in eight states. Some of the families boasted several generations of 4-H members.

A big drawing card was the opportunity to revisit the historic camp where many alumni spent childhood summers, dating back to the 1930s when the university first acquired the camp. Alumni toured cabins, looked at photo displays and a history slide show, and saw first-hand how the camp has changed in the past 65 years.

“We slept in tents when I attended camp,” remarked Marlena Neddenriep Hellwinkel. “Nevertheless, 4-H taught me to be a good loser and a humble winner, and it also taught me the meaning of being responsible.”

What hasn’t changed is the enthusiasm and excitement of the 4-H experience and the positive, long-term impacts 4-H has on its alumni, many of whom are notable Nevadans and important contributors to their communities and state. (See Attorney General Brian Sandoval’s story, Page 2).

“The Nevada 4-H program has grown from several hundred members of boys and girls clubs in the early 1900s to more than 63,000 today, with programs at camp, in clubs, and during and after school,” explained UNCE Dean Karen Hinton, a former 4-Her who welcomed the group. Alumni gathered in decade groups, reminisced and celebrated the past, present and future of their enduring 4-H experience.
Evaluating Nevada’s child-care providers

Research shows the quality of child care is directly related to the education and training of child-care providers. Yet, a 2002 study found that only 16% of responding Nevada child-care providers had two or more years of early childhood education. UNCE has offered workshops for the past 16 years to help child-care providers get the training they need to ensure quality care for Nevada’s children. The workshops include topics such as development and discipline, language development, music, art, math, physical development and science. UNCE’s Sally Martin, Crystal Swank, Jackie Reilly, Jo Anne Kock, Dan Weigel, Marianne Papa, Madeleine Sigman-Grant and Mikki Bixler have pitched in to accomplish this large undertaking. Funding was received from the Welfare Division of the Nevada Department of Human Resources.

In 2003, UNCE added a new component — Roary Rethink Anger Management — with support from the Welfare Division through the Nevada State Bureau of Services for Child Care. The curriculum was taught to more than 220 caregivers at 14 workshops statewide. With each provider caring for an average of 28 children, more than 6,400 children will reap the benefits. When asked to rate the workshops on a scale of 1 to 5 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful), 95% of participants rated the program a 4 or 5, with an average score of 4.6. The survey also showed a significant gain in participants’ knowledge of the components, elements, process, meaning, and potential impacts of anger.

More than 1,270 child-care providers attended UNCE’s statewide training sessions in 2003, an indication that more than 37,000 Nevada children are receiving care from better-trained providers.

For more information on child-care provider education, call Sally Martin, (775) 784-7009.

Caring 4 Kids child-care education modules

For some child-care providers, attending workshops may be difficult. UNCE’s Crystal Swank, Sally Martin, Jackie Reilly, Madeleine Sigman-Grant and Dan Weigel teamed up to develop self-study training modules for new or entry-level providers. Debbie Mitchell and Sherry Waugh, in the university’s Human Development and Family Studies department, assisted. The Caring 4 Kids curriculum, including videos, self-study guides and tests, are available for checkout at 65 public libraries and offices throughout Nevada.

With support from the Nevada Department of Human Resources, Maternal and Child Health funds, and the USDA, the Cognitive Development and Food Safety modules were completed. Cognitive Development has been checked out more than 900 times, and Food Safety more than 500 times. Often a child-care center supervisor will check out a module and use it to train the entire staff.

Ninety-three percent of the survey respondents who completed Cognitive Development said they plan to implement, continue or increase the use of nearly all the modules’ strategies. Seventy percent of the respondents completing Food Safety said they would use the information to change the way they work with children “a lot” or “quite a bit.” UNCE faculty will complete two new modules in 2004 for child-care providers: Nevada Child Care: Getting Started in Your New Profession, and Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting.

To access the Caring 4 Kids Cognitive Development module, logon: www.unce.unr.edu/publications/child.htm, click on Caring 4 Kids.

Guiding Teens

Adolescence can be a time of isolation, loneliness, frustration and anger. Research has found that supportive connections help youth develop into healthy and successful students.

UNCE’s Guide Peer Mentoring program matches eighth-graders with incoming “at risk” sixth-graders to provide advice and information helping them get connected to school and social activities, and avoid problem behaviors. For older students, peer mentoring gives them the opportunity to build leadership, teamwork and people skills. Most importantly, the guide offers friendship and support to the younger student.

“When field trips, planned activities and weekly meetings,” said Randy Brown, UNCE program administrator, “the mentors and mentees both learn some valuable life skills.” During a summer leadership camp, 75% of the incoming sixth-graders who attended said they felt more comfortable in their new middle school. One eighth-grade guide commented, “I learned how to work together, how to interact with younger kids, and how to help them.”

Where in Clark County can students see cows, goats and a horse show; watch wool spinning, cow milking or just sit on a tractor? At the annual Ag in the Classroom event — the Las Vegas Farm Fest — where 4-H youth and other groups expand their animal projects to other children.

Farms are invited to attend this agriculture and horticulture expo at Horseman’s Park. More than 10,000 students, teachers and parents see exhibits presenting their farming and planting skills.

Youth learn where their food comes from!

“Each child takes home a paper cup with a seed they planted,” said Angela O’Callaghan, UNCE Social Horticulturist. “They can watch the tiny plant grow and then plant it in your yard.”

Added O’Callaghan, “With the relationship the university has with the government agencies involved, Farm Fest has really grown over the past few years.” The Dairy Council of Utah/Nevada sponsored the event, assisted by UNCE, the Farm Bureau, School District teachers, and others.

For information, contact Angela O’Callaghan, (702) 222-3130, or ocallaghan@unce.unr.edu
Cleaning up Nevada’s waterways

Keeping waterways free of pollution is the goal of the Clean Water Act, reauthorized in 1987 to focus on nonpoint source pollution control and management. UNCE teamed up with the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) to develop educational workshops and a field guide that would help ranchers become more familiar with the Act and encourage voluntary compliance.

“We have been educating people about water quality issues so they will have the information if and when these problems arise,” said Loretta Singletary, Lyon County Extension Educator. She taught more than 200 producers and others at 20 workshops statewide with UNCE’s Jay Davison and Tom Porta, Bureau Chief of NDEP’s Water Quality Planning.

“We particularly targeted landowners, providing them with tools to improve the quality of water leaving their land,” added Davison.

Attendees indicated statistically significant increases in knowledge gained as a result of the workshops, including improved understanding of nonpoint source water pollution, the Clean Water Act, NDEP’s water quality monitoring program, Total Maximum Daily Loads, best management practices and developing a water quality management plan.

Some producers indicated they would volunteer for involvement in on-site monitoring of water quality management practices in order to learn more and improve their own practices.

“We’ve been pleased with the response from ranchers — it has been very positive,” said Porta. “This program has been a great asset to us in the work we do, and it’s raising people’s awareness.”

Truckee watershed plan aims to protect water quality

When Washoe County Water Resources needed public input to create a first-ever watershed protection plan for Truckee River tributaries, they asked UNCE’s Susan Donaldson and the Washoe-Storey Conservation District to help.

Donaldson organized a meeting of stakeholders, including representatives of Reno, Sparks and Washoe County, and agencies, developers, environmentalists, homeowners, tribes and agriculturalists. As facilitator, she explained the history and issues related to water and how they affect our quality of life in the face of community growth. Her passion was contagious, and the group began talking to other groups. They invited every Community Advisory Board and Neighborhood Advisory Board to get involved.

After a “health” assessment of the 20 watershed streams from Verdi to Sparks, was completed, the group formed goals and objectives for each one. The plan was finalized, and the Regional Water Planning Commission approved it in July 2003. The new 3,000-home development planned for Verdi will follow the plan’s recommendations, which is a real accomplishment,” Donaldson said.

This plan was truly driven by stakeholder input,” Donaldson added. “By working together, we did a better job of sharing information and resources and we got a lot of synergy going.” Donaldson said this synergy has led to improved working relationships among the various entities and commitments by the cities and county to implement the plan. In December 2003, they funded and hired a watershed facilitator to put the plan into action.

“We didn’t want just another document that sat on the shelf,” Donaldson said. “We came up with a list of doable items — that’s the most important part of the plan.”

THE LAKE TAHOE REPORT

The Lake Tahoe Report — an LTEEC collaborative media campaign — began to air on KOLO-TV’s Tuesday evening newscasts in February 2003. The 90-second segments reach 40,000 viewers nightly, 10,000 of whom live in the Tahoe Basin. The topics include watershed hydrology, water quality parameters, ecosystem management and pollution sources, aimed at educating Tahoe residents and visitors about important issues and what can be done to protect the lake’s fragile environment. UNCE’s Heather Segale coordinates the weekly segments. Four Tahoe newspapers run articles featuring the report’s topic of the week: the Tahoe Daily Tribune; Tahoe World; North Lake Bonanza; and Tahoe Truckee This Week. Segale, UNCE’s John Cobourn, other UNCE faculty and LTEEC members author the articles. Often, KOH news radio will air segments on complementary topics.

Funding was provided by the USDA Forest Service, Sierra Club, Incline Village General Improvement District, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and KOLO-TV.

Keeping Tahoe blue

By now, most people know Lake Tahoe is losing its world-renowned clarity and that the decline is almost entirely human caused. In order to stop the loss of clarity, measured as a loss of clarity, measured as a measure of a year, assessments conducted by UNCE indicate the need to educate residents, visitors and businesses on steps they can take to protect Lake Tahoe’s beauty and water quality.

UNCE joined University of California Cooperative Extension to form the Lake Tahoe Environmental Education Coalition (LTEEC), a collaboration of more than 30 California and Nevada agencies who work together to prevent pollution of the lake.

Led by UNCE’s John Cobourn and Heather Segale, LTEEC sponsored 51 community events, involving 4,350 participants, in 2003. For example, more than 150 contractors attended an erosion control workshop, learning effective ways to install best management practices (BMPs) on local properties to help prevent erosion. The contractors and other workshop participants improved their knowledge from an average 71% on pre-tests to 88% on post-tests. Participants put the knowledge to work, as more than 1,100 BMP Certificates of Completion were awarded last year to property owners by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, nearly double the number awarded in 2002.

In addition, Cobourn revised UNCE’s popular Home Landscaping Guide for Lake Tahoe and Vicinity, printing and distributing 10,000 more copies in 2003. The publication won a national first place (gold) award in the long publication category from the Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals.

While it is difficult to directly measure the impact of LTEEC’s work on Lake Tahoe’s water quality, the 2002 Secchi depth reading, used to measure the depth of water clarity, was the best on record since 1992. Despite expected fluctuations in the Secchi depth reading, which decreased to 71 feet in 2003, it appears that science-based recovery efforts are working.

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Bringing back the native plants

Nevada’s native rangelands are under constant attack from invasive weeds, wildfires, commercial development and other activities that displace the native plant communities, writes UNCE Plant and Soils Specialist Jay Davison in his Field Guide for Collecting Native Seeds in Nevada. To restore the lands that have been adversely affected, the Bureau of Land Management and Governor of Nevada initiated a project to increase the supply of native seeds produced in Nevada. Davison was a founding member of the group that included state and federal agencies and private producers to:

• Increase seed collections from public and private lands;
• Establish native seed production fields by Nevada farmers;
• Conduct research on native plant species; and
• Help BLM to develop long-term contracts with local growers.

“The demand for native seeds is not large but is expected to grow in the near future,” said Davison. “This provides an opportunity for individuals or groups to earn money by collecting or growing native seeds and then selling them.”

BLM funded the production of Davison’s field guide, used to educate more than 360 people in the identification, collection, handling, storing, monitoring, marketing and a host of other items related to the native seed business.

“We wanted to stimulate seed collection on public and private lands by putting the manual in the hands of interested folks so they would understand the process and the species that are most desirable,” said Ted Angle, BLM’s Native Seed Coordinator. “Jay produced an excellent manual and has been a great source of advice. He knows the economics of growing seeds and has been the most important individual in the native seed collection project.”

The Nevada Department of Agriculture’s specialty crops program funded two producers’ efforts to grow varieties of native seeds. Schurz rancher Randy Emm planted Indian Ricegrass on five acres in 2002, but did not receive enough water allocation to yield a successful crop. “Nevertheless, there is a potential here for farmers if they can keep their seed fields weed-free,” he remarked.

In 2001, Frank Soares, a second-generation Fallon farmer, planted 25 acres with plots of Blacktongue, Thickspike Wheatgrass and Basin Wildrye. “It’s not easy, but we learned a lot,” he reported. “The seed uses a lot less water than alfalfa, but it all depends on the price you get at the end of the three-year growing period.”

This will never be a huge industry, commented Dick Beerman, president of the Nevada Wildland Seed Producers Association, “but it could be a very nice cottage industry.”

Seeking new markets for native seed

Marketing is a key issue in the production of native seeds in Nevada. Kynda Curtis spearheads efforts to assess whether seed producers could mill, process and package native seeds, plants and forbs. Curtis, State Extension Specialist and Assistant Professor of Resource Economics, procured a USDA grant for the Nevada Wildland Seed Producers Association.

“We will conduct a feasibility study for a grower-owned cooperative in rural Nevada to see if it would be economically feasible,” said Curtis. “We will investigate market demand, current and possible production quantities and costs, and the cost of building and running a milling facility. We will consider any native species demanded by a certain market.”

The study will look at the feasibility of developing “Nevada’s Own,” a brand of native grass seeds and forbs. “In addition to their role in range-land rehabilitation, native grasses and forbs provide year-round protection for soils and are highly drought-resistant,” said Curtis. Thus, they could be used in reclaiming mining land, urban landscaping and health and beauty products.

Dick Beerman, Orovada native seed grower and president of the association, adds that another possible market for the fledgling product is the ornamental floral industry.

Pest management strategies help hay growers

Diamond Valley is aptly named. This jeweled oasis, tucked into the wider expanses of Nevada’s sagebrush desert, is the lush, green home of 70 hay farms. The center-pivot sprinklers wend stealthily, the balers hum on cool summer nights and the trucks haul loads of hay out of the valley. The top-quality timothy hay is destined for high-end markets in the U.S. and Pacific Rim countries. Timothy hay is a preferred product because it is high in fiber and other feed values.

But a major glitch occurred in these smooth operations in 2002 when a large attack of tiny mites caused severe economic losses to the hay crops. “The combined losses in this valley totaled about $5 million,” estimated Mark Moyle, an alfalfa and hay grower for more than 20 years and Vice President of the Nevada Hay and Forage Growers Association. “We had no effective pesticide labeled for use against this pest.”

Willee Riggs, Eureka County Extension Educator, explained, “There aren’t a lot of cows and sheep in the county, and when the mines are down, everything hinges on hay production to keep the local economy going.”

With this critical need for a registered pesticide for mite control on cool season grasses, UNCE Plant and Soils Specialist Jay Davison represented Nevada with the Interregional Research Project Number 4. This is the only publicly funded program in the U.S. that conducts research and submits petitions to the Environmental Protection Agency for registration of pest control agents on specialty crops, a $40 billion industry.

“We were successful in getting the miticide Azamite selected as one of only 15 top priorities for 2003 out of 350 requests nationwide,” said Davison, who collaborated with Riggs and the growers on the project. Azamite is used to control plant-feeding mites. IR-4 researchers will develop residue and tolerance data for the miticide after testing, the product would be available under a label authorization.

“This is a real accomplishment and if the product is approved, it would be something we could use in the fight to protect our crops,” said Moyle.

UNCE is collaborating with the Nevada Department of Agriculture and other western states to identify future needs regionally and develop pest-control strategies that are integrated, safe and effective.
Student intern learns how to teach

When Chanika McCombs first learned she would be facilitating a group of parents and children, she had some reservations. “I was a little nervous about leading a group all by myself, but I’ve learned it can be a lot of fun,” said the university graduate who majored in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS).

HDFS instructor Jeanne Hilton suggested that McCombs contact UNCE’s Pat Behal about an internship in the Family Storyteller program. When Behal observed the 1999 Reed High School graduate’s energy, intelligence and charm, she knew she would do a great job.

The UNCE program aims to increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children spend together in literacy activities. Targeting families at risk for low literacy, the program includes a series of six workshops that show parents how to read with their children and provides free books and other literacy activities.

McCombs said there was a lot of groundwork to do before she jumped into the classroom, including gathering materials and information, contacting the sites and making the workshop arrangements. While this was a good learning experience, McCombs enjoyed working directly with the families the most.

“It’s really fun to work with families in a group setting, to interact with them,” said McCombs. “I really enjoy presenting to them and sharing a good message. I also learned how important literacy is for young children,” she added.

“Chanika is a great instructor,” said Sarah Caldwell, a participating parent. “She knows her stuff. She’s real good with the kids, too, and has lots of patience. She’s awesome at what she does!”

McCombs, who also received a Regents Award, hopes to attend graduate school following her graduation in May 2004.

Money on the Bookshelf — a national award-winning workshop series — provides parents and children ages 4 through 10 with a fun and nonterrorizing way to talk about money and enhance the financial skills of both parents and children. Because the program is built around children’s books, it also promotes literacy development and is designed with limited-resource and lower-literacy families in mind.

UNCE’s Pat Behal and Alice Crites created Parent Guides to accompany the 12 children’s books. The guides explain the money ideas presented in the books, give guidance to parents on talking about the books as they read to their children, and include activities they can do at home to reinforce the books’ ideas.

“I learned I should be teaching my children about money now — not waiting until they are older,” remarked one parent who participated in the program.

Participants have shown statistically significant gains in how often they talk with their children about money and include them in family discussions about money. It is not surprising the curriculum is being used in 43 states. The Nevada Committee for the Protection of Children provided the initial program funding.

To access the Parent Guides and reading tips, logon: www.unce.unr.edu/ Westerna, and click on “Money on the Bookshelf.”

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“People love it, and it’s free,” said Sherry Ely, a member of the Children’s Cabinet, which teaches the Native American Storyteller Project at Natchez Elementary School in Wadsworth.

“The program’s gone over really well…there’s not much out there in terms of early child hood literacy help. I think it’s been really well-received,” she said.

The 10-week pilot project — a partnership between UNCE, KNPB-TV and the Children’s Cabinet — targets Native American families because of their historically lower reading levels. The first six weeks includes the Family Storyteller curriculum (See story on Page 10), designed especially for the Native American population. The last four weeks incorporates KNPB’s Ready to Learn, which shows families how to use video and media to learn reading concepts.

The Children’s Cabinet received $80,000 in funding from the Nevada Welfare Division’s Office of Early Care and Education for the pilot project. It was conducted at Natchez, Nixon Elementary School in Wadsworth, Walker River Head Start in Schurz and Head Start in Elko.

Preliminary evaluations by parents rate the program 4.6 to 5, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Denise Love, a parent participating at Natchez, agrees with the ratings. “The kids really enjoy it, plus you learn a lot of things you can do with your children,” she said. “The kids really enjoy the books and the little activities they have. They always look forward to coming.”

To receive Little Lives, contact Sally Martin, (775) 784-7009, or smartin@ unr.edu

LITTLE LIVES
A parenting newsletter published in English and Spanish

“I am a 48-year-old, single father of a baby boy...the Little Lives newsletters were often the only interaction I had with another ‘parent’ … It was a welcome sight to take each issue out of the mailbox and just hold it!”

This is one of many testimonials about the value of Little Lives since it began in 1987 with a mailing list of 100 parents. Since then, UNCE has sent more than 20,000 subscriptions to new parents statewide, many in Spanish. Currently, there are 1,400 subscriptions, totaling an astounding 165,000 publications yearly.

“Little Lives is a free, age-paced educational tool, designed to prevent child abuse and childhood obesity and enhance parenting skills that maximize family relationships and child outcomes,” said UNCE State Specialist Sally Martin, program originator. Other participating UNCE professionals are Jo Anne Kock, Dan Weigel, Marianne Papa and Madeleine Sigman-Grant.

Parents receive a monthly newsletter during their child’s first year and every other month for the next two years. The publications cover changes in intellectual, emotional, social, language and muscle development of the infant as well as information on nutrition, health and safety. They help parents deal with challenges such as a baby who cries a lot, toilet training or a toddler who says “no” to everything.

In a survey of more than 200 parents, 97% of respondents said Little Lives helped them in their parenting experiences, and nearly all found the newsletters useful. Furthermore, a follow-up study indicates that none of the participants had substantiated child maltreatment reports, even though a high percentage are at elevated risk for maltreatment.

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To receive Little Lives, contact Sally Martin, (775) 784-7009, or smartin@ unr.edu
Partnership teaches youth about calcium-rich foods

Baby boomers are painfully aware of the importance of calcium, particularly among women, as the risk of osteoporosis increases with the aging process. What is not widely known is that calcium needs begin when women are in their teens. If the consumption of low-fat, calcium-rich food starts during ages 11 to 14, the risk will not be as great in later life.

To increase calcium intake among teens, the Nevada Nutrition Network, a statewide coalition of public and private partners, created Calcium, It’s NOT Just Milk! The program was funded by the USDA Food and Nutrition Services, Food Stamp Program.

During 2003, more than 9,300 contacts were made to middle school students to encourage the consumption of low-fat yogurt, flavored milks, calcium-fortified orange juice, broccoli, string cheese and bean and cheese burritos. “The information is given to students in several ways,” said Mary Wilson, program administrator. “We hold special events so youth can learn about the variety of foods with calcium and enjoy free samples of the recommended foods. Games and contests are used to reinforce important concepts.”

Students learn how to find the calcium content on food labels and how much calcium they need each day. During a hands-on event, one student was heard saying, “I never knew that food tasting this good was good for me!”

In 2003, a 16-item instrument was conducted pre- and post-program to evaluate students’ knowledge, attitudes, and consumption of calcium-rich foods. There was a significant knowledge gain in six of 10 questions, with a trend toward more frequent selection of calcium-rich food. There were significant increases in the reported selection of cheese, ice cream, frozen yogurt, pudding and milk. Sixty-three percent of students agreed, “The food tasting events encouraged me to eat more calcium-rich foods.” Eighty-two percent agreed, “After learning about the importance of calcium in my science class, I try to include more calcium-rich food in my diet.”

The calcium curriculum was taught to middle school science teachers in Clark, Nye, and Lincoln County schools. The curriculum is available on CDs for teachers throughout the state.

For more information, contact Mary Wilson, at (702) 222-3130, or willsonm@unce.unr.edu

Coordinating services for seniors

Nevada had the nation’s fastest growing senior population ages 65 and older between 2000 and 2003. Providing efficient health care and social services to older adults while maintaining their wellness, quality of life and independence is a major challenge.

UNCE Aging Specialist Claudia Collins collaborated with the Sanford Center for Aging and two university graduate students to develop a statewide single point of entry. They received more than $400,000 from the Nevada Division for Aging Services and worked with this agency and the Governor’s Commission on Aging to organize a central source of information on senior services and a hotline for access.

“One system will reduce barriers to services, such as lengthy applications, repeated and inconsistent when older adults or their families inquire about or apply for services,” said Collins.

The team created a coalition of more than 700 stakeholders and a Leadership Advisory Committee of 29 organizations to help design and develop initial screening data. A trainer produced a curriculum and instructed more than 80 elder care providers to improve their communication, interviewing and crisis management skills. A pre-screening tool was tested at six pilot sites.

The final system will create a database, including a profile of the senior population and their needs; incorporate the ability to predict future needs; and evaluate how the needs are being met.

For more information, contact Claudia Collins, at (702) 222-3130, or collinsc@unce.unr.edu

One young mother was already stressed out over her lack of grocery funds when she discovered her husband was being laid off. She asked her Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) instructor for help and the instructor showed her how to prepare nutritious meals from what was on hand. “I can’t believe I was able to prepare four complete meals from stuff I already had in the house,” the mother exclaimed, “and I only spent $5!”

UNCE’s federally-funded EFNEP targets limited-resource families with children. It helps them stretch their food dollars, handle food safely, buy, plan and prepare nutritious meals, increase physical activity and prevent chronic disease. National data continues to show a disparity between the health of low-income households and that of higher-income families. According to Healthy People 2010, income is associated with differences in incidents of heart disease, diabetes and obesity. In 2003, EFNEP reached more than 500 Clark County families, for a total of more than 2,200 people. Entry and exit surveys showed that 85% of adults and youth improved one or more nutrition practices. EFNEP is a winning formula in every way its impact is measured. Results of a recent cost-benefit analysis indicates that for every dollar spent to implement the program, $10.64 is saved in future health care costs.

S-T-R-E-T-C-H your dollars and still eat healthy!

One of the many community partners that refer students. EFNEP’s youth phase is delivered during the summer at boys and girls clubs, scouts, recreation centers and after-school programs. It promotes images about food and body size that are consistent with good health.

The research-based curriculum is hands-on, allowing participants to gain the practical skills necessary to make positive behavior changes. They also learn self-worth and they have something to offer their families and society. “Our participants learn that with proper planning, their families can enjoy low-cost and nutritious meals,” said Blanca Guevara, an EFNEP instructor.

For more information on the EFNEP program, see: www.unce.unr.edu/Southern/health/efnep.html

Photo by Marilyn Ming
Water wise arboretum

Lyon County’s population is growing at an even faster pace than Nevada as a whole, and thus, the wise use of water is becoming increasingly important. When Cooperative Extension received vacant land the size of a football field adjacent to the Yerington office, Loretta Singletary and Marcia Moffit recognized an educational opportunity. “We decided to turn the vacant lot into an attractive learning area for residents and visitors,” said Singletary, Extension Educator. “Our Water Wise Demonstration Arboretum is a tool for educating citizens about water-conserving trees and shrubs that can be grown in the northern Nevada climate.”

Singletary received a grant for materials from the Nevada Division of Forestry; augmented by funds from the USDA Forest Service. Pat Rowley, Urban Forestry Coordinator with UNCE and Resource Economics, assisted with design of the arboretum and selection of tree species. Western Nevada Supply funded the drip irrigation system and Silverado Ranch Supply provided materials, equipment and labor. Many other volunteers participated, totaling more than $20,000 in labor and materials. “This project has received a great show of support from the Yerington community,” said Moffit, UNCE Administrative Assistant who is studying at the university to become a certified arborist. “Our outdoor classroom helps citizens learn more about tree varieties, landscape diversity, irrigation technology, organic mulching, wildlife habitat and the role of volunteerism.”

The arboretum will be ready in summer 2004 for people of all ages to enjoy.

Keeping plants healthy in a reuse water environment

The Las Vegas Valley is one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. The increased water demand due to the population boom is expected to overtake current water allocations over the next few years. Rising water costs and legislation are forcing people to manage water more efficiently and are encouraging managers of large landscape areas to utilize reuse water for irrigation. Many golf courses and other turfgrass areas will be converted to reuse water (treated sewage effluent) over the next 10 years. Angel Park Golf Club, for one, is in its fifth year of research and fourth year of using reclaimed water to irrigate. The water is piped from a nearby treatment plant to two on-site lakes, which feed the irrigation system. Besides saving potable water, the reclaimed water is high in nitrogen, a natural fertilizer. “The most important thing to know, though, is which plants can take this higher salt-content water,” said Bill Rohret, Angel Park’s Director of Golf Course Maintenance. “Annuals usually have a shorter life span because of the salt issue.”

UNCE Water Specialists Dale Devitt and Bob Morris educate homeowners and large turfgrass managers and conduct research on the tolerance of landscape plants to salts contained in reuse water. Their list will help managers select the best plants for exposure to effluent. Funding is provided by the Clark County Sanitation District and Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Nevada border cities enhance their economies

Laughlin, Nevada and Bullhead City, Arizona boosted their population by 65% over the past decade, designating it one of the fastest growing rural regions in the nation. The border cities’ leaders asked UNCE Economist Buddy Borden to provide leadership and technical assistance to help them manage the population growth and diversify the economic base.

Borden developed and implemented a five-year program, including the inclusion of a 15-member regional advisory committee. During 2003, the area’s major issue was the need for water-based recreation. “Everyone was anxious to understand the value of this,” explained Jo Elle Hurns, Executive Director of the Laughlin Chamber of Commerce.

Borden collaborated with University of Arizona Cooperative Extension (UACE) to find answers to the question, “What is the total regional economic impact from water-based recreation?” They conducted a comprehensive tourism assessment and impact analysis, involving water recreation, business operator and National Park Service surveys. The results: the region serves more than 578,000 water recreation visitor days, supporting $48.7 million of economic activity, including $11.5 million in personal income and more than 570 jobs.

“The entire advisory committee was cohesive, excited and pleased with the results of the study,” added Hurns.

UNCE and UACE programming also helped with the selection of industry and community amenities to enhance the region’s economy:

- Laughlin Bay Marina Development, a 32-acre, $100 million project; construction began in late 2003;
- Bureau of Reclamation Recreational Regional Project, a plan to develop 2,000 acres of public land with trails, river walk, events center, golf course and cultural interpretation sites;
- Lake Mohave improvements, including paving, additional launch lanes and slips, which have begun; and
- New business expansion and introduction, including major retail outlets, collectively supporting more than 300 new jobs.

Homegrown energy

Solar, wind and geothermal power are domestic energy sources that are abundant, clean and renewable. They have the potential to create jobs and economic development in Nevada and help the nation reduce its dependency on imported fuels.

These technologies, however, require special expertise and skills and depend upon collaboration between universities, governments, organizations and individuals to stimulate and promote development of renewable energy sources. The Nevada State Office of Energy has funded a Rural Energy Outreach Education Program in which UNCE faculty with economics backgrounds are being trained in renewable energy systems to help community people develop potential projects.

“Now is a tremendous opportunity for this implementation of alternative energy projects in Nevada,” said John Burton, UNCE’s Assistant Director, who coordinates the new programming efforts.

UNCE faculty Don Breazeale, Kynda Curtis and Willie Riggs — with combined economic development experience of more than 50 years — are learning about this burgeoning industry from experts in Nevada and other western universities. The faculty will, in turn, train producers and others on how to complete a project feasibility analysis and/or business plan. This is critical for rural Nevadans to take advantage of the opportunities provided by renewable energy.
Weed Warriors
Volunteers make progress in the war on weeds

Jill Wilkinson’s weed-pulling passion erupted during the 2000 Dyer’s Woad Pull near her Spring Creek home. “I didn’t know what a noxious weed was until that day,” she admitted. “No one knew they had weeds on their property. It’s a serious problem – the weeds are very tenacious, take over good vegetation and spread rapidly. I got pretty fired up about it!”

The next day she called friends and neighbors and contacted Kent McAdoo, UNCE Natural Resources Specialist, for guidance, along with the Nevada Department of Agriculture, BLM and U.S. Forest Service. Her small meeting grew to 25 individuals, who formed the Spring Creek Weed Action Team (SWAT), and launched an aggressive attack on invasive weeds, by:

• Educating area residents about the threat of noxious weeds;
• Identifying weeds and mapping infestations; and
• Controlling and eradicating weeds.

The volunteers made presentations, staffed booths, wrote media articles, surveyed public and private property, developed a map database, monitored areas, gave tours, conducted weed pulls and applied herbicides to large infestations.

SWAT raised $15,000 to support weed control; the Woad Warriors swelled to nearly 200; and Dyer’s Woad was reduced along roadsides and in lawns. Wilkinson received the 2000 Weed Warrior of the Year Award from the Nevada Weed Management Association (NWMA), and SWAT received the Earth Team Award from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and NWMA’s 2003 Weed Managers of the Year Award.

“Everyone in rural Nevada needs to be aware of the tremendous threat of weeds,” commented Tony Lesperance, a Paradise Valley rancher.

The former university professor thought he had retired to a small cattle ranch when he caught sight of the widespread weed invasion. He and Brad Schultz, Humboldt County Extension Educator, revitalized the Paradise Valley Weed Control District. With help from the Nevada Department of Agriculture, BLM and local ranchers, more than 1,200 acres were treated. The NWMA recognized Lesperance’s leadership efforts with its 2003 Weed Warrior of the Year Award.

These are just a few Weed Warrior success stories that could be told from nearly every Nevada county. There are more than 30 Nevada coordinated weed associations and other groups, said Dawn Rafferty, Nevada Department of Agriculture’s noxious weed coordinator. Some groups are galvanized by just one champion, but none succeeding without committed, hard-working citizens as passionate about repulsing the invaders as Wilkinson and Lesperance.

Cooperative Extension professionals have played a role in many of these groups, serving as catalysts, educators and grant consultants. But to achieve long-term sustainability in the weed-control business, volunteers need to be continually asking the question posed by Wilkinson, “How do we recruit the next fired-up group?”
We educate in many ways!

In 2003:
- University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) personnel made nearly 773,000 face-to-face contacts with Nevada citizens — an increase of 7% over 2002.
- The Nevada print media published more than 1,100 articles educating citizens about UNCE programs, with a total of more than 20 million contacts. TV and radio stations aired nearly 300 segments describing UNCE programs.
- More than 56,000 visitors entered the UNCE Web site through the home page, accessing publications and other program information.
- UNCE personnel sent 73,000 newsletters to community citizens.
- Master Gardener volunteers handled 11,000 phone inquiries, giving horticulture information to Nevada homeowners.

Living With Fire is only one of more than 800 English and Spanish publications, that augment our educational programs. Logon to: www.unce.unr.edu/pubs.html

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