MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to our Program Highlights for 2012. This publication gives just a snapshot of some of the more than 140 programs offered by University of Nevada Cooperative Extension throughout the state.

Cooperative Extension is the outreach college that extends knowledge from the University of Nevada and other land-grant universities to local communities. We study your needs and then design programs to meet them, working always to do the following:

- Strengthen the financial health and security of Nevadans;
- Improve the health, safety and well-being of Nevadans;
- Increase and ensure sustainability of natural resources;
- Ensure a positive future for Nevadans through education across the lifespan.

Our programs this year come as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act, the bill that created the land-grant system in the United States. That federal law, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on July 2, 1862, allowed great universities such as the University of Nevada to come into being.

The Morrill Act was the beginning of our country’s effort to bring the knowledge of the university to citizens across the country. This, in essence, is the mission of Extension, so the Morrill Act holds a special place in our professional hearts and minds and it’s a reminder of the great responsibility we have to citizens of Nevada.

I invite you to visit your local UNCE office and learn more about the broad range of programs that we’re conducting in your community. Our faculty and staff are eager to share their knowledge and provide educational resources and programs that produce measureable impact and make a difference for Nevadans.

Karen Hinton
Dean and Director
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2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Faculty made 788,437 face-to-face contacts with children, youth and adults throughout Nevada.
- Faculty and staff received grants totaling $3,829,038.
- Faculty published nearly 100 educational fact sheets, curricula and special publications.
- Volunteers contributed 77,436 hours helping deliver UNCE programs.

2012 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Dean and Director: Karen Hinton
Assistant Dean and Director: John Burton
Cover design: Chad Waters
Writers: Robert Mills, Marilyn Ming, Andrew Church, Jim Sloan
Area Directors: Southern - Jerry Buk; Western - Frank Flavin; Central/Northeast - Loretta Singletary

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FISCAL YEAR 2012 UNCE FUNDING

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UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MISSION

To discover, develop, disseminate, preserve and use knowledge to strengthen the social, economic and environmental well-being of people.
Innovative Cooperative Extension program tackles childhood obesity, nutrition and acceptance of others.

**Bolstering Economies**

4 Stronger Economies
Together program is bringing Extension experts to rural communities to find ways to build new business.

**Fighting Fires**

6 Living With Fire is helping Nevadans before and after a wildland blaze strikes; the program’s training materials have been used around the world.

**Saving Lives**

13 The Nevada Radon Education Program educates Nevadans about the risks of radon and encourages homeowners to test for it.

**Images on the Cover**

1. Health and nutrition: A participant in the All 4 Kids program practicing one of the movements taught in the innovative program.
2. Children, youth and families: 4-H Ambassadors from 2010 give tours of the Nevada 4-H Camp.
3. Senior health: Classes help senior citizens remain healthy and independent.
4. 4-H Camp activities at Lake Tahoe.
5. Natural resources: South Lake Tahoe High School students work on a Lake Tahoe native plant project to restore ravaged zones.

*Photo by Rena Escobedo.*

6. Health and nutrition: Mary Wilson, Area Nutrition Specialist, teaching a class.

7. Agriculture, community development: Holly Gatzke, Extension Educator in Lincoln County, works with farmers and ranchers who are diversifying.
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) is teaming up with the Nevada office of U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development (USDA RD) and the Governor’s Office of Economic Development to help Nevada rural counties plan their economic futures.

The Stronger Economies Together (SET) program combines the community development expertise of UNCE faculty with detailed planning data to help the eight rural Nevada counties of the Western Nevada Development District collaborate on regional economic development.

Cooperative Extension Dean and Director Karen Hinton said the SET initiative dovetails with Gov. Brian Sandoval’s economic development plan for the state.

“A regional approach will help us reach the governor’s goal of bringing 50,000 new jobs to Nevada by 2014,” Hinton said. “The SET program will give counties the tools they need to attract jobs and industries.”

The Western Nevada Development District is comprised of the eight counties in rural Western Nevada: Carson City, Douglas, Lyon, Mineral, Churchill, Storey, Pershing and Humboldt counties as well as the incorporated cities and tribes within them. Representatives from these areas work with Extension experts to analyze the detailed economic data and draw a blueprint for future economic initiatives.

“There analysis might show that some of the counties in their region have manufacturing clusters while another part of the region has a transportation hub and that the two can work together,” said USDA RD public affairs specialist Kelly Clark.

Sarah Adler, the Nevada State Director for USDA RD, noted that a Brookings Institute study identified seven target industries suited to Nevada. The SET program will provide the new eight-county regional planning team the data it needs to determine how the counties’ assets align with those industries.

The regional SET team will be working with UNCE’s Buddy Borden, an economic development specialist; Marlene Rebori, a specialist in community and organizational development; Carl Dahlen, Extension’s leadership specialist; Tom Harris, Extension specialist in economic development and director of the University Center for Economic Development; and Steve Lewis, Extension educator.

Dahlen, who has been conducting community assessments in collaboration with the Nevada Rural Development Council and helping Nevada towns set development goals in recent years, said the SET program is an excellent training program.

“It helps communities work with other communities to combine assets and challenges to see where they are connected and how they can work together,” Dahlen said.

How UNCE bolsters diversification efforts

UNCE has a history of helping communities expand and diversify their economic base. For instance:

- Economic Development Specialist Buddy Borden’s Business Retention and Expansion program identifies current business needs and barriers in southern Nevada that may restrict a business’s growth or encourage it to relocate. Borden works to help businesses overcome those obstacles.

- A healthy economy depends on the well-being of existing firms,” said Borden.

- Carl Dahlen, Extension’s leadership specialist, works with a variety of UNCE faculty on community assessments. When a community requests an assessment, a team goes to town and conducts “listening sessions” with community groups, identifies strengths and weaknesses, and reports back to the communities. The teams have completed 12 assessments.

- Lander County Extension Educator Rod Davis works with a team identifying industries that might utilize former mining sites where there is an established infrastructure. The Lander County Sustainable Economic Development program seeks to modulate fluctuations in the Battle Mountain economy. A recent summit resulted in the construction of a 59-unit housing complex.

- Northeast Clark County Extension Educator Carol Bishop’s Small Business Support program teaches participants how to assess risk and write business plans. It is offered in conjunction with the Small Business Help Center, which helps determine licensing and zoning regulations for new businesses.

“Owners who are educated on potential costs and returns, market conditions, and their own strengths and weaknesses incur less risk,” Bishop said.
Preschoolers learn healthy habits

By Marilyn Ming

“Healthy, happy, active, fit...All 4 Kids eat smart, don’t sit.”

This catchy chant was created to encourage preschool children to choose healthy snacks and find fun activities to stay active.

The prevalence of childhood obesity has dramatically increased nationwide. Specifically, 14 percent of Nevada’s children less than 5 years of age are overweight. The underlying causes range from genetic propensity to socio-economic, cultural and environmental influences resulting in unhealthy eating and physical inactivity. The All 4 Kids program employs the ecological model to address childhood obesity in both the home and child care environments.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s All 4 Kids: Healthy, Happy, Active, Fit was developed by faculty from maternal/child nutrition, exercise physiology and early childhood education.

“All 4 Kids helps children meet Nevada’s Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Standards,” explained Teresa Byeington, early childhood education specialist and co-creator of the program, “while encouraging preschool children and their families to practice healthy eating habits and to be active every day.”

The All 4 Kids program, in cooperation with children’s child care teachers and parents, is divided into three units to provide participants with interactive experiences that promote healthful habits regarding movement and physical activity; snacks and feeding cues; and acceptance of self and others.

“For the 24 preschool lessons,” explained Anne Lindsay, exercise physiologist and co-creator of the program, “we utilize dance, a lifetime skill, to introduce children to the specific movements outlined in Nevada’s Pre-K Standards in addition to various health concepts.”

In 2011, the All 4 Kids program was presented to 483 preschool children and 328 parents at four different locations.

Young children are dependent on their families to provide their meals and movement opportunities. Therefore, the All 4 Kids program encourages families to build healthy habits together.

“Each week of the program children receive an All 4 Kids Family Pack containing a nutrition message and a game or activity that the families complete together,” said Madeleine Sigman-Grant, maternal child nutrition specialist and co-creator of the program.

Families also receive a Family Connection handout explaining the concepts of the week. Teacher Connection handouts are distributed to preschool teachers to educate them about each unit and to give them specific ideas of how they can extend program concepts into their daily lesson plans.

After each eight-lesson unit, a family event is held for parents to learn more about what their children have experienced.

“Each event has interactive activities and a food demonstration for families to try new foods and be active together,” Lindsay said.

Each family event concludes with children performing the All 4 Kids dance they learned during the unit.

Children are taught about Go foods (healthy foods that can be eaten every day) verses Whoa foods (unhealthy foods that can be eaten once in a while).

“At the end of the program,” Sigman-Grant said, “significantly more preschoolers are able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy snack foods.”

During 2011, the All 4 Kids program partnered with outside agencies to provide collaborative instruction with the All 4 Kids staff and a train-the-trainer model to allow All 4 Kids to be delivered by independent providers.

Home visitors were also taught how to deliver the program to individual families.

The All 4 Kids media CD/DVD project was revised to enhance its abilities as a stand-alone physical activity promotion tool.

The dances were demonstrated and videotaped for a new DVD master, which now includes an instructional menu option that allows viewers outside the All 4 Kids classroom to learn the dances.

In 2011, All 4 Kids CD/DVDs were purchased from nine universities or Extension offices and 11 miscellaneous schools and child-care providers in 10 different states.

Contact the All 4 Kids faculty by email: lindsaya@unce.unr.edu; byingont@unce.unr.edu; and sigmangrantm@unce.unr.edu.
‘Fire’ program assists homeowners

Key impacts of the Living With Fire program:
- More than 100 LWF pre-fire activity workshops taught since 2001;
- More than 60 peer-reviewed publications developed;
- Six Nevada Wildfire Interface Fire Summits involving representatives of Nevada’s fire-prone communities and the fire agencies responsible for those communities held;
- Six Nevada Wildfire Awareness Weeks held;
- More than $1.8 million of extra-mural funding has been acquired to support LWF activities;
- The 2011 Nevada Wildfire Awareness Week had 102 partnering organizations, 163 events, over 3,000 attendees and more than $31,000 of in-kind contributions;
- Materials are among the most widely used wildfire threat-reduction education products in the nation with more than 2 million copies in circulation in 16 states and Canada.

“The key to reducing the wildfire threat to our communities is to have aware, informed and proactive residents. Living With Fire is the program we use in Nevada to accomplish this.”
Bertral Washington, chief
Clark County Fire Department

At midnight on Nov. 17, 2011, a fire broke out on the western edge of Reno. The blaze, whipped by fierce winds, spread rapidly, and soon many residents were told to evacuate.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s Living With Fire (LWF) staffers worked quickly with local media and firefighting agencies to distribute information on what fleeing residents should wear and bring with them and how they should prepare their homes in order to improve the structures’ chances of surviving the blaze.

As thousands of evacuees gathered at emergency shelters, relief workers handed out an “After the Fire” publication jointly developed by UNCE and the Nevada Division of Emergency Management, giving evacuees information on returning to their homes.

In the coming weeks, scores of residents attended LWF workshops, learning valuable information on dealing with insurance claims, revegetating their properties and preparing their homes to withstand any future fires.

While the Caughlin Fire had a devastating impact, destroying 32 homes before it was extinguished, firefighting officials agree that wildfires could be having a much more profound impact on the communities in high fire-hazard areas if it weren’t for the Living With Fire Program.

Former University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Associate Director Elwood Miller agreed. Miller has been actively involved in reducing the wildfire threat in Nevada since he retired in 2000 and he’s seen how well LWF has worked with local fire protection officials in teaching residents how to better prepare to survive wildfires.

“The respect among firefighters for Cooperative Extension, and Living With Fire, can’t be overstated,” Miller said.

According to Ed Smith, the director of the LWF program, much of Nevada is considered a high fire-hazard environment, possessing the ingredients to support intense and uncontrollable wildfires. Within these wildfire-prone areas are 68 communities and 13,400 individual homes rated as extreme and high wildfire hazards.

“Many residents of these communities are not prepared to survive wildfire,” Smith said. “Research indicates that pre-fire activities performed by the homeowner – such as creating defensible space, removing pine needles from rain gutters, replacing wood shake roofs and screening vents – can significantly improve house survivability during wildfire.”

Prior to implementation of the LWF program, there was no organized effort to teach Nevadans these wildfire threat-reduction techniques. Consequently, it was unlikely that homeowners would implement the practices necessary to reduce the wildfire threat to their families, properties, and communities.

Through LWF, launched in 1997, Nevadans learn how to live more safely in high wildfire-hazard environments and implement pre-fire activities. Continued on page 7
Partnership sows native plants

By Robert Mills

For University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) Water Quality Education Specialist Sue Donaldson, controlling the invasive weeds that are moving in on fire-damaged areas of the Tahoe Basin means having a steady supply of native-plant seedlings. And those have never been easy to get.

But recently Donaldson forged a partnership with Rena Escobedo of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and Jamie Greenough, a teacher of South Lake Tahoe High School to solve that problem. Last spring, Escobedo obtained funding to gather and propagate seeds of Tahoe native plants and Greenough found space in the local high school’s greenhouse where the plants could grow to maturity.

“The high-school students began growing several native species, including woolly mule’s ear, broadleaf lupine, yarrow and sulfur buckwheat, in the greenhouse,” Donaldson said.

Although the effort hit a setback when vandals destroyed many of their seedlings, volunteers used the remaining funding to restart new seeds for this season, which include as many as 53 different plant species, from grasses to flowers to shrubs.

Once they reach maturity, these native plants will be used in restoration areas throughout the Tahoe Basin.

“Native plants have a lot of benefits,” Donaldson said. “Because they are well-adapted to the specific area, they require little maintenance and have fewer pest issues. They consume less water and require less fertilizer and pesticides. Native plant roots often do a better job of holding the soil in place, reducing the amount of erosion into the lake. Some native plants stay greener longer, helping to slow down the spread of wildfires.”

Unfortunately, replanting efforts sapped remaining grant funds needed to purchase pots, soil and other materials to sustain the plants during the summer months when school is closed. A project to develop a Master Gardener program in South Lake Tahoe may provide a vehicle for summer maintenance, but supplies are still needed. If you have materials to donate, contact Rena Escobedo at 530-543-2733.

Continued from page 6

To promote widespread adoption of pre-fire activities in Nevada’s high wildfire-hazard communities, a partnership was formed between the University and Nevada’s local, state and federal firefighting and emergency organizations. Partners meet routinely to plan events and provide input into projects. Living With Fire partnership accomplishments include:

- Standardizing pre-fire activity recommendations, creating a consistent message and the need for just one set of educational materials and programs for Nevada.
- Jointly delivering Living With Fire pre-fire recommendations via publications, curricula, audio-visuals, the Web, television, radio, newspaper, workshops and conferences.
- Mapping wildfire hazards with university researchers using remote sensing techniques.
- Establishing the Nevada Fire Safe Council, a 501(c) (3) organization that acquires funds and organizes communities to mitigate the wildfire threat.
- Encouraging activities that have resulted in thousands of tons of hazardous vegetative fuels being removed, community hazard assessments completed and collaborative community action plans developed, making Nevada communities safer and better prepared for future fire threat.
- LWF key community partners include Nevada’s local fire departments and districts, state agencies (e.g., Division of Forestry, Division of Emergency Management, State Fire Marshal and Division of Insurance), federal agencies (e.g., Bureau of Land Management and USDA Forest Service), Sierra Front Wildfire Cooperators and Nevada Association of Counties. Key University partners include faculty from UNCE (e.g., natural resources, horticulture and community development specialists) and faculty from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences.

In the future, Smith said the LWF partners will develop programs targeting the professions necessary to reduce the wildfire threat to communities. These would include roofers, builders, landscapers and architects.

Smith said LWF is developing a certification program, including curriculum materials, training programs and a proficiency test, that will allow these businesses to advertise themselves as certified under the LWF program.

Smith said that when LWF partners promote pre-fire activities to homeowners, they can provide lists of certified professionals to help the homeowners get the necessary work done. In turn, these certified pre-fire professionals will actively promote the LWF program and its pre-fire recommendations. Ultimately, homeowners will get a variety of qualified and readily available pre-fire professionals to pick from at competitive prices.
Child care training reaches 5,000 teachers

In Nevada, more than 60 percent of preschool children spend at least part of each week in non-parental care. For many children, the majority of their day is spent in a child care setting.

The first five years of a child’s life are a critical time of growth and development. Parents and early childhood teachers play an important role in helping children develop physically, cognitively, socially and emotionally.

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension faculty and staff teach educational classes to over 5,000 early childhood professionals in Nevada each year. Educated teachers have been shown to be more positive, sensitive and responsive to young children and provide richer language and cognitive experiences.

“The first five years of a child’s life are a time of rapid brain development,” said Teresa Byington, an Early Childhood Education Specialist in Clark County. “These years build a foundation for future learning and well-being. The quality of care and education children receive in these early years is critical to their future success.”

There are no national standards or certification processes for teachers or caregivers of young children in the U.S. States have varying requirements for employment as a child care provider or teacher but most states, including Nevada, require very minimal education and experience. Nevada child care licensing requires child care providers complete 15 clock hours (or 1 college credit) of professional development each year.


“I got so much from this class!” one participant said. “I have already implemented some of the strategies I’ve learned. I have a clearer understanding of the subject and feel confident in sharing it with teachers and parents.”

“Training is key,” said Youth Development Specialist Jackie Reilly, who is based in Washoe County. “A number of studies have shown that improving the skills and knowledge of child care providers measurably improves the quality of care children receive. The providers themselves develop more pride and satisfaction from their work. Everybody wins.”

Over the last 25 years, UNCE faculty and staff have developed, taught and published 22 separate training curricula. Here are some other accomplishments:

- Early childhood professionals learn new, developmentally appropriate techniques each year and they in turn teach about 75,000 Nevada children and families.
- New training on infant and toddler development was recently taught to nearly 300 caregivers in 13 Nevada communities. Participants increased in their understanding of developmentally appropriate practices for infants and toddlers and how to respond to concerns about an infant’s or toddler’s development.
- UNCE in collaboration with the Technical Assistance Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) project has also been providing a professional training program to teach early childhood educators and parents on how to promote the social and emotional competence of young children.

UNCE Early Childhood Education Specialist Diane Branson said the program addresses the issue of caring for children with challenging behaviors. Since 2011, more than 2,000 participants statewide have received TACSEI training. Intensive coaching has been given to teachers at five early childhood programs around the state to support their program-wide adoption of the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based model for preventing and addressing children’s challenging behaviors.

“Children whose challenging behavior is not addressed adequately are at a significant risk of developing chronic emotional behavioral disorders, dropping out of school and being incarcerated as adults,” Branson said.

UNCE also offers self-study modules on food safety, recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect, cognitive development and getting started as a child care professional. Each module includes written information about the topic and DVDs or streaming videos illustrating key concepts. Approximately 500 individuals complete the Caring 4 Kids modules each year and child care centers have purchased copies of the modules for ongoing training of their own employees. An additional 80 to 100 caregivers complete the Child Abuse Recognition and Reporting self-study guide which is available in English and Spanish on the UNCE website.
A family literacy success story

Family Storyteller, which has brought lasting educational and economic benefits to thousands of Nevada families, expanded in 2011 with the help of a continuation grant from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The program, which helps incorporate books and reading into everyday lives, was selected for a 2010 National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Partnership Award.

The program was launched in 1997 and has grown into four distinct areas:

- The original version for English-speaking families;
- A version for Spanish-speaking families (Cuentos en familia) launched in 2010 and expanded last year;
- A version for families involved in English as a Second Language program;
- A version for Native American families titled “Catching Dreams: Indigenous Stories for Family Reading.”

Family Storyteller is a series of workshops designed for families with limited language skills and few children’s books at home. Its goal is to improve a child’s readiness for school by increasing the amount and quality of the time young children spend with their parents reading and enjoying other literacy activities.

UNCE collaborated with KNPB-TV, Washoe County libraries, the Washoe County School District, Nevada’s College of Education, the Northern Nevada Literacy Council, State Library System, Children’s Cabinet, Head Start, Even Start, preschools, the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station and private donors to develop the program.

According to UNCE Human Development Specialist Dan Weigel, who helped create the program, an estimated 25 percent of youth and adults in Nevada have inadequate literacy skills. This places thousands of children at risk of being unable to keep up in school, which can lead to them dropping out later in life. Studies show that about half of Nevada’s third-grade and fourth-grade students are below basic reading level.

“The foundation for literacy is built during the preschool years and breaking the cycle of limited literacy is important to ensure that children have the reading skills needed to succeed when they go to school,” Weigel said.

Family Storyteller has taught more than 11,500 families in nearly 2,000 sessions. The program has partnered with more than 100 school districts, libraries, human service agencies and others throughout the state. More than 400 literacy specialists, librarians, elementary school teachers and principals have been trained to conduct the program. Family Storyteller has been used in 30 states and several other countries.

Weigel noted that Native American parents and children historically have lower reading levels than the general public. Native Americans requested a program designed for their unique needs and culture, so in 2010 Weigel helped launch Catching Dreams, which features six children’s books written specifically about and by Native Americans.

Sally Martin, a UNCE Family Life Specialist who helped create the Family Storyteller program, said that parents in the program learn that reading to their preschool-aged children builds a strong language foundation that helps children learn to read and allows them to progress through school with greater success.

“Kids who struggle in school become the people likely to end up unemployed or in low-paying jobs,” Martin said. “So it’s really exciting and positive when they gain these foundation skills.”

A mother and child read a book during a Family Storyteller session.

Program helps parents as well as children

A three-year evaluation of Family Storyteller found that:

- Children develop their literacy and language skills, and participate at home in language activities they would not otherwise engage in. Overall, they increase their enjoyment of books and reading.
- Parents spend more time reading with their children, encouraging them to learn new words and to anticipate what will happen next in the books they are reading. In turn, the parents gain confidence and spend more time reading with their children.
- Families who are in ESL programs and who also take the Family Storyteller courses find that both parents and children increase their English vocabularies. Parents and children alike come to enjoy reading more.
- Parents participating in the Native American version of Family Storyteller report that they read more with their children about cultural traditions, talk more with their children about cultural traditions and notice that their children enjoy reading books with them.
4-H Camp: An educational escape

By Robert Mills

The shorelines of Lake Tahoe play host to one of Nevada’s greatest treasures – The Nevada State 4-H Camp. For 74 years, the Nevada State 4-H Camp served as a place for Nevadans to learn and develop in serenity.

Kent Worker, UNCE 4-H camp manager, said the camp’s 33 acres of trees, beach and indoor facilities provide Nevadans with the opportunity to escape as a team into a beautiful, secluded and structured learning environment.

“The 4-H Camp allows children, young adults and adult professionals, to come up to a beautiful site in Tahoe with whatever group they represent,” he said.

The 4-H Camp combines recreational activities such as volleyball, basketball, swimming, kayaking and campfires with traditional facilities like cabins, offices, a dining hall and an open-air amphitheatre.

“The Nevada State 4-H Camp is really something unique,” said UNCE Assistant Director John Burton. “Its position on the shores of beautiful Lake Tahoe affords it the opportunity to provide youth and adults with educational experiences they could not find elsewhere.”

Most of the buildings on site were constructed over 50 years ago, Worker said. However, a two-story cabin completed in 2006 was constructed under the strictest environmental rules and exceeds code requirements by 50 percent. Photovoltaic panels convert sunlight into electricity. The LEED-certified cabin is equipped with an electronically activated sensor that runs four individual heat exchangers.

Along with 4-H groups from Nevada and California, other groups throughout the state and surrounding region frequent the facility.

“We have Girl Scouts; several UNR groups; masters, honors and student government members; the Muscular Dystrophy Association; and Nevada Future Farmers of America,” Worker said.

Professional groups also reserve the camp for weeklong team-building retreats. The site’s rope course, which is currently undergoing routine maintenance, is a thrilling way for youth and adults to build confidence in their team members, friends and coworkers.

Education is the backbone of the camp, so priority is given to groups seeking a learning experience. All educational programming must be provided by visiting groups. Facilities and maintenance are provided by UNCE staffers like Kent Worker and others who work at the camp.

For more information on the Tahoe 4-H Camp, contact Worker at 775-588-6943 or email him at workerk@unce.unr.edu.

New programs focus on energy conservation

Nevada has one of the poorest rates of energy conservation in the country, but University of Nevada Cooperative Extension is working to improve environmental sustainability in commercial and government buildings.

UNCE serves as host and manager of Nevada Workforce Connections, which trains building facility staff in adaptations that improve energy efficiency.

The Building Environmental Sustainability Technician program (BEST) provides intense training in best practices to conserve energy for line staff of large buildings, said Angela O’Callaghan, a Cooperative Extension social horticulturist. These buildings include Las Vegas resorts, state buildings, medical centers and government buildings.

As an enhancement of the BEST program, O’Callaghan and M.L. Robinson, a UNCE environmental horticulturist, added a horticulture element to the training.

HEES (Horticulture Education for Environmental Sustainability) teaches best practices to conserve plant materials, water and other natural resources to landscape professionals from municipalities, Las Vegas resorts, universities and private landscape maintenance firms.

HEES covers best management practices for water and energy conservation and improved use of horticultural chemicals. Both the BEST and HEES training will be offered regularly in the upcoming year. For more information on either of these trainings, contact O’Callaghan at 702-257-5581 or ocallaghana@unce.unr.edu or Robinson at 702-257-5529 or robinsonm@unce.unr.edu.
BMP program aiding Tahoe clarity

By Robert Mills

Scientists have charted a decline in Lake Tahoe’s renowned clarity since the 1960s, and attribute it largely to stormwater runoff from homes, developed properties and roads within Tahoe’s watershed. It’s one of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension (UNCE) Water Resource Specialist John Cobourn’s jobs to arrest this clarity drop through Best Management Practices (BMPs).

BMPs are land-management techniques that control erosion, prevent water pollution and result in attractive, healthy landscapes, Cobourn said. “Property owners and builders in the Lake Tahoe region are required to install BMPs on all developed properties, he said.”

Through frequent workshops and publications, Cobourn and UNCE train up to 150 BMP installers each year.

“When these regulations were put in place in 1987, few people knew a thing about BMPs,” Cobourn said. “Many had no idea what kind of impact building had. Today many businesses include installation of BMPs in their service.”

With four partner agencies – the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service and the local conservation districts in California and Nevada – UNCE has led the development of BMP installation workshops and training materials every year since 2000.

Cobourn’s courses feature Best Management Practices for paved driveways, conveyance of runoff to infiltration systems, vegetation and mulch to cover bare soil, slope stabilization and BMPs for construction sites. Since 2000, when the BMP retrofit partnership formed between UNCE and its four partner agencies, more than 14,800 property owners have passed inspection and received Certificates of BMP Completion. This constitutes a huge reduction in the amount of sediment delivered into Lake Tahoe, Cobourn said.

In 2008, University of California, Davis researchers announced that new analysis of their 40 years of water-quality data for the first time showed a decline in the rate of clarity loss in Lake Tahoe’s water since 2001, a desired long-term outcome.

“The BMP Retrofit program is the largest single project in the Lake Tahoe Environmental Improvement Program,” Cobourn said. “It is a significant factor in this unprecedented improvement in Lake Tahoe watershed conditions.”

Naturalist program teaches way of the desert

Nevada Naturalist is an adult, environmental-education program creating volunteers to help government and community partners with education programs and environmental projects.

M.L. Robinson, environmental horticulturist and program administrator, said University of Nevada Cooperative Extension faculty and agency experts provide 85 hours of instruction on ecology, taxonomy, soils, water, endangered species, geology, native plants and animals, insects, invasive species, environmental laws and biological diversity.

Field instruction takes place at Red Rock Canyon, the Wetlands Park, Lake Mead National Recreation Area and the Desert Tortoise Conservation Center.

Participants create a project such as a presentation, program or field guide. One participant created hand-drawn note cards depicting at-risk desert plants.

More than 100 naturalists have graduated, including 18 in 2011. In 2011, grads provided 100 volunteer hours enhancing the butterfly garden at the Lifelong Learning Center.

They’ve also done reptile-amphibian workshops and “Nature Break” activities for 4-H day camps.

Pat Kranish, who completed the program in 2011, recently published a story titled “Spirit Cave Mummy.” In 2011, 10 new projects were developed, including a presentation on the burrowing owl, the “Be a Nevada Naturalist” field guide, and publications on spelunking and caving in Nevada, medicinal native herbs and a history of colorful characters from southern Nevada.

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Bootstraps solves two problems at once

How Bootstraps helps participants

According to a program evaluation, Bootstraps participants benefit in a number of ways, including:

- They learn how to solve problems, set and reach goals and take responsibility. After leaving Bootstraps, most return to school or get jobs. One participant – with Extension’s help – was able to start his own business removing pinyon and juniper trees from a local ranch.
- They become more self-reliant. They learn how to find a job and live on their own. They gain confidence.
- They learn job safety, which is particularly important since they are working with pesticides or chainsaws in remote country hundreds of miles from a hospital.
- They learn better life skills and how to save money.
- They become more friendly and respectful to others and learn teamwork.

How it works

The Bootstraps program trains up to 15 participants each year at each of the two sites. The teams start with a two-week classroom session learning about job safety. They work on their resumes, meet job recruiters and develop interview skills. They learn conflict resolution and teamwork. In subsequent weeks, they spend each Monday morning in the classroom and then the remainder of the week in the field working.

By Jim Sloan

Rod Davis’s classroom is often the side of a hill or a remote campsite in the middle of northeast Nevada’s back country. There are no desks or blackboards or cafeterias. Davis is part of a team of University of Nevada Cooperative Extension experts who are involved in the Bootstraps program, which trains out-of-work and out-of-school rural Nevada youth how to pull their lives together while working on vital natural resource projects on public lands.

Since the program’s inception more than seven years ago, Davis, the Extension Educator for Lander County, UNCE Youth Development Specialist Marilyn Smith, Nye County Extension Educator Amy Meier and Bill Evans, State Specialist in Human Development and Family Studies, have seen dozens of Nevada young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 graduate from the program.

What’s more, hundreds of acres of public land have been treated by Bootstraps crews for the encroachment of damaging pinyon-juniper forests or noxious weeds. Most Bootstraps participants find work or return to school after they leave the program.

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Rod Davis (in vest) addresses a Bootstraps crew.

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Rural Nevada counties have some of the highest rates in the nation of young adults from 18 to 25 years old who are not working and not in school. Smith says Nevada has one of the worst records in the nation for teens successfully transitioning from youth to adult. These young people who drop out of school and then find themselves unemployed often wind up in jail or abusing drugs or alcohol, costing the state money.

“The economic impacts on the family and community of idle youth not capable of supporting themselves are obvious,” Smith says. “But if you want to reverse the problem and get these young people back in school or in a job, programming has to be intensive and provide long-term support. That’s what Bootstraps does.”

The idea for Bootstraps came along about the time that Davis was working with state and federal land managers to figure out how to control the pinyon-juniper forests, which have increased 10-fold in Nevada and the Intermountain West since the late 1800s, squeezing out other vegetation and the wildlife that need mountain brush.

“We started looking at the old model of the California Conservation Corps and the idea of a program that would train people and put them to work,” Davis recalls. “It turned out there was a pretty big target audience for that kind of program.”

Davis and Smith, working with the Bureau of Land Management, launched Bootstraps in 2005. A similar program was launched by Meier in Tonopah, where the issue is weeds.

Bootstraps benefits from an infusion of funds from partners and programs. It received a $492,000 American Recovery and Restoration Act grant, and in 2011 the program signed a three-year agreement with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and a Lander County ranch to use Federal Farm Bill funding to restore 1,400 acres of habitat for $281,134. Other funds have come from BLM, Bighorns Unlimited, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Nevada Division of Wildlife and the National Mule Deer Foundation.

During 2011, the Battle Mountain Bootstraps crew thinned or removed pinyon and juniper trees from more than 1,000 acres of wildlife habitat in Lander and Eureka counties.
Radon program encourages safety

By Susan Howe

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s Nevada Radon Education Program (NREP) is a partnership with the Nevada State Health Division (NSHD) to educate Nevadans about the health risk posed by elevated levels of radon in the home. The program began in 2007 as a statewide grant-funded program.

NREP’s goals are to educate Nevadans about the health risks of radon, encourage homeowners to test their homes for radon, fix radon problems, build new homes with radon-resistant new home construction techniques and test for radon when buying real estate.

In Nevada, with more than 11,000 usable test results since 1989, 25.8 percent of the homes tested found levels of radon at or above 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L) of air, the Action Level at which the EPA recommends fixing a home to prevent or mitigate radon entry. Counties with the greatest potential for elevated radon levels are Pershing (51.8 percent), Eureka (41.7 percent), Douglas (39.8 percent), Carson City (38.6 percent), Elko (34.4 percent), Lincoln (29.8 percent), White Pine (29.5 percent), Lyon (29.2 percent), Mineral (27.6 percent), Humboldt (27.4 percent), Lander (23.1 percent), Storey (25 percent) and Washoe (20.3 percent). Elevates levels of radon have also been found in homes in Churchill (12.7 percent), Nye (9.4 percent) and Clark (8.8 percent) counties.

Exposure to radon is the leading cause of lung cancer for nonsmokers. Smoking combined with elevated indoor radon levels is an especially serious health risk. The EPA estimates that radon causes 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. each year.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that has no odor, color or taste and is produced by the breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. Radon gas can enter buildings through foundation openings and become trapped inside. Radon decay products are easily inhaled, where they can attach to lung tissue, resulting in radiation doses to the lung tissue through radioactive decay. Any building with contact to the ground has the potential for having a radon problem. The only way to know if your home (or building) has elevated levels of radon is to test.

Not everyone exposed to radon will get lung cancer, but the greater the amount of radon and the longer the exposure, the greater the risk. When radon problems are found, mitigation will reduce the risk for lung cancer.

Testing is the first step to identify and mitigate a radon problem. Nevadans can receive free or low-cost radon test kits by mail or at county reception centers. Since 2007, NREP has distributed more than 24,636 test kits to Nevada residents, of which more than 23,565 were given free. Test kits are free each January of 2012 that has been produced a radon PSA in January of 2012 that has been shown at least 592 times.

Program reaches thousands of homeowners

Since 2007, UNCE’s Radon Program has:

- Responded to more than 10,687 phone calls or e-mails;
- Spoken to at least 41,903 people;
- Provided more than 228 educational presentations;
- Distributed more than 275,524 publications or informational materials;
- Initiated more than 413 newspaper or magazine articles, 124 television reports, 239 radio PSAs, and 519 website pages;
- Produced a radon PSA in January of 2012 that has been shown at least 592 times.

Based on information from radon datasheets, certified radon testers, radon labs and radon mitigators, NREP has been educating Nevadans and helping them to protect themselves from radon:

- More than 110 homes have been tested for radon and at least 592 times.
- More than 456 homes have been tested during real estate transactions.
- More than 110 homes have been built using radon-resistant new home construction techniques.
- More than 38 schools have been tested for radon and at least 13 schools have been mitigated for radon.
New effort to help farmers grow, diversify

By Jim Sloan

With more than 60 percent of the farmers in the United States over the age of 55, federal agriculture officials have been scrambling in recent years to find ways to bring new faces to the farm.

That’s where University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s new Herds & Harvest program comes in. This three-year program kicked off in 2012 with a series of workshops designed to help both new and experienced farmers and ranchers improve their knowledge of both the business and agricultural production sides of their profession.

“Farmers and ranchers face some pretty steep odds against success,” said Staci Emm, a Mineral County Extension Educator. “This program will give them the support they need.”

The first year’s program included workshops on field crops, like alfalfa and grass hay; locally grown meat products, including lamb, beef and poultry; and vegetable farming. Classes were held in Extension office sites around the state starting in March and continuing into the fall.

“Everyone in Nevada wins when we can trace the origin of our agricultural products,” said Lyon County Extension Educator and Central/ Northeast Area Director Loretta Singletary. “Helping Nevada producers ensures that our state can feed itself and purchasing power stays in our state.”

In addition to classes, the Herds & Harvest program provides mentoring and educational business management assistance for Nevada agricultural producers. This helps farmers and ranchers calculate a return on investment in hoop house production, for instance, or set up an enterprise budget or map out their cattle and hay costs.

Holly Gatzke, the Extension Educator in Lincoln County and one of the faculty members on the Herds & Harvest team, noted that even though agriculture in rural Nevada largely centers on alfalfa hay and calf production, many farms in her area are small and medium-sized operations with the average income per operator below $26,000 per year.

Producers in these desert regions are recognizing the need to diversify their operations, Gatzke said.

That’s why Gatzke frequently meets with farmers and ranchers one-on-one to discuss ways to diversify their agricultural operations. She talks to them about how to raise produce in hoop houses, which can extend the growing season and increase production and profitability, and how to sell that produce to restaurants in Las Vegas and at farmers markets and through CSAs – Community Supported Agriculture, in which consumers purchase a share in a farm and receive a box of seasonal produce each week during the growing season.

“Direct marketing to consumers through farmers markets, CSAs, and marketing to gourmet restaurants and specialty stores can provide producers with a dependable, higher-end priced market,” Gatzke said.

Holly Gatzke, top left, discusses hoop houses in Lincoln County. Carol Bishop, the Extension Educator in Northeast Clark County, helps farmers develop enterprise budgets.

How UNCE educators help Nevada farmers

In addition to regularly scheduled Herds & Harvest workshops, UNCE educators also were busy in 2011-12. For example, they:

■ Held one-on-one meetings with producers to discuss diversification opportunities for their farms or ranches.
■ Held routine meetings with producers to share marketing opportunities and growing tips.
■ Gave presentations around the state on school gardening, farmers markets, CSAs and value-added food products.
■ Initiated a new grant to start local processing of commercial food products in Lincoln County.
■ Researched licensing, equipment and safety systems for processing value-added products.
■ Taught safe canning practices.
■ In response to demand from Las Vegas restaurants, initiated a study establishing 14 small on-farm demonstration sites in seven locations across different climates in the desert to test potential commercial berry crops.
■ Conducted the Agriculture Innovation Forum Series to provide practical information to agricultural producers in Carson Valley.

For more details about University of Nevada Cooperative Extension’s Herds & Harvest program, visit www.unce.unr.edu.
Backyard farmers learn the ropes with GYO

Vegetable gardeners new to Nevada often experience a harsh awakening: the soil is nearly barren, the desiccating wind could dry out a jungle and the growing season starts late and ends early, leaving you hardly enough time to see tomatoes turn red before the first frost.

Well, if any of these challenges have ever gotten the better of you, rest assured – Heidi Kratsch and her team of gardening experts can come to your rescue.

Kratsch is the state horticulture specialist for University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, and last year she introduced a popular new series of classes for the area called “Grow Your Own, Nevada!” This series of eight classes is offered three times a year in locations throughout the state, and covers everything from fertilizers and compost to pest control and preserving produce.

And while success is never guaranteed in Nevada gardening, the classes will certainly improve your odds of a good harvest, Kratsch said.

“The most common problem people in northern Nevada have is knowing when to plant,” she said. “If you plant too early, you can lose the sensitive plants, like tomatoes and corn, to a late frost. But if you plant too late, you run the risk of not getting any fruit before the fall’s first frost.”

Kratsch noted that an increasing number of Nevadans are interested in growing food for their own table as well as growing it for sale at farmers markets. Many parts of Nevada, she said, are considered “food deserts” because people don’t have access to locally grown produce, and programs like Grow Your Own help improve that situation.

Grow Your Own, Nevada is one of several Cooperative Extension programs that help small-scale farmers and backyard gardeners succeed in Nevada. It’s “Herds & Harvest” program, for instance, helps out farmers and ranchers who have been in business less than 10 years or are diversifying their agricultural operation, and “Great Ideas from Growers” brings small-acreage farmers together to discuss trends in farming in Nevada. These and other programs fall under the UNCE “Tomorrow’s Table” initiative helping Nevada agricultural producers and backyard gardeners enjoy more success.

Grow Your Own, Nevada provides horticultural information to homeowners who desire to become successful backyard food producers in our unique high-desert climate. The program consists of eight two-hour sessions and covers topics ranging from vegetable cultivar selection to composting and harvesting and preserving. The goal is to increase local food sustainability as measured by an increase in the number of families involved in backyard food production.

“Gardeners and would-be gardeners want to become more self-sufficient and produce more of the food they consume locally,” Kratsch explained. “This program also appeals to gardeners wishing to get into small-scale local food production.”

A major area of program emphasis for UNCE is to “improve food security through home and small-scale production.”

Many Nevadans desire to grow their own foods to gain access to safe and healthy produce, to become more self-sufficient, and for their own personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

Kratsch said that her ongoing work on a statewide needs assessment included visits to various Extension offices around the state, where she interviewed Extension educators and staff involved in horticultural issues.

“There was almost universal support for and interest in an educational, non-volunteer alternative to the Master Gardener program that could be delivered statewide from Reno by interactive video,” Kratsch said. “The Grow Your Own, Nevada program helps to fill that need.”

The program is available via interactive video in Carson City and Churchill, Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Lyon, Nye, Pershing, Washoe and White Pine counties.
Reflecting on the land-grant mission

On July 2, 1862 – 150 years ago – President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Morrill Act, which established institutions in each state designed to make a college education available to people of all classes.

The measure, also called the Land Grant College Act, gave each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative. The idea was that the states would use the land or the sale of that land to establish so-called land-grant colleges.

All told, more than 70 colleges were funded or created by land grants, including such major universities as the University of Nevada, Reno, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Nebraska, Washington State, Clemson and Cornell.

The Morrill Act opened the doors to higher learning for millions of farmers, craftsmen and other working folks who were previously unable to get a college education. The Act also shifted the focus of higher learning from classical studies to applied sciences designed to better prepare students for careers after college.

Although Cooperative Extension wasn’t formally created until 50 years later with the Smith-Lever Act, the Morrill Act established the country’s goal of making the resources of land-grant universities available to average citizens – which is at the core of Cooperative Extension’s mission. The roots of Cooperative Extension’s role of bringing the knowledge, research and resources of land-grant universities to the average citizen were planted when Abraham Lincoln signed the land-grant bill crafted by Vermont Senator Justin Morrill.

“The land-grant university system is being built on behalf of the people, who have invested in these public universities their hopes, their support, and their confidence,” Lincoln said as he signed the bill into law.

Extension’s celebration of the Morrill Act has been ongoing throughout 2012. We’ve used the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act as an opportunity to reflect on the work of the land-grant university in Nevada and on the accomplishments of Cooperative Extension in Nevada over the 100 years since it was formally created in 1914.

Here are some the activities we’ve been involved in:

- We’ve created an online timeline exploring the history of the Morrill Act and the impact of Cooperative Extension in Nevada.
- We’re producing a video in which modern day land-grant leaders – from Cooperative Extension Dean and Director Karen Hinton to University of Nevada, Reno President Marc Johnson – discuss the ongoing importance of Extension and the land-grant mission in Nevada.

- We’ve helped catalogue the dozens of boxes of historical information about Extension residing in the Mathweson-IGT Knowledge Center’s Special Collections.
- 4-H state ambassadors are working on history projects of their own, documenting the role 4-H has played throughout decades in Nevada communities and settlements.

Our celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Morrill Act will segue into our celebration of the Smith-Lever Act, which directed land-grant universities to deliver university knowledge and innovation to all citizens through the establishment of the Cooperative Extension system.

Throughout its nearly 100-year history, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension has educated from community-based offices throughout the state. Faculty and staff have identified critical needs and helped residents develop skills and acquire knowledge to improve their lives.

“The fundamental land-grant principles are as relevant today as they were in 1862 – accessibility, practical as well as classical education, research and discovery in the public interest, and connectedness to all people,” Hinton said.

“The issues and needs have changed considerably over the decades but changing economic needs and societal challenges emphasize the need for a responsive and dynamic university system that can bring the University’s knowledge and research to the state in order to solve complex contemporary issues.”