Pioneering Partnerships: 1998 Annual Report Colorado State University Extension

Colorado State University Extension's role is to link the educational and research resources of Colorado State University with the people of Colorado through partnerships among the university, and the Colorado and federal governments. We engage a network of scientists and educators who anticipate and address critical needs of Colorado residents, and help them solve problems in their personal and professional lives. The profiles of the significant contributions of Colorado State Extension in this report are just a sample of the impacts our organization is making throughout Colorado; they are evidence of a solid return on public and private money invested in our endeavors.

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1998 Annual Report

Message from the director

Each year, as we consider the content and theme for our annual report, I am particularly struck by three things -- the breadth and focus of our programs, the diverse audiences we reach, and the number of organizations and individuals with whom we partner. These partnerships represent challenges and opportunities as we address the complex and unique issues of various regions in the state. And as I reflect on the past 32 years, it is clear that Colorado State University Extension has been "pioneering partnerships." These partnerships help us reach new audiences and strengthen relationships with those who already are familiar with and have benefitted from our programs.

This year, as in the past, we have selected for this report a small sample of program impacts to share with you. Our goal is to give you a brief overview -- or snapshot -- of the people and places our educational programs and activities reached in 1998. It's also our way of saying "thank you" to our partners for giving so selflessly to benefit others.

In this report, you will read about Coloradans from the Eastern Plains to the Western Slope, in urban and rural areas, who participated in Extension programs ranging from a market goat project that reaches Latino youth in Weld County, to the Food Stamp Nutrition Education program that teaches elderly residents in Pueblo County about eating and living healthy, to the re-emergence of fruit-crop production in Dolores and Montezuma counties, to small-acreage management, a program that has statewide application.

The accomplishments described in this report are examples of Extension's seven program plans, which address the critical needs and issues of citizens in all corners and parts of the state. The program plans include:

- sustaining agriculture and the environment
- enhancing families and communities
- engaging communities in transition
- partnering for green Colorado
- improving nutrition, food safety and health
- managing small acreages
- strengthening youth development

What you won't find in this report are examples of "traditional" production agriculture and 4-H club programs. But it's important to note that these programs are the foundation upon which our innovative new programs are built. Both have been components of Extension's successful 85-year history, and will remain parts of our future. For example, of the more than 130,000 youth who participate in the 4-H program statewide, nearly 20,000 are enrolled in clubs. And more than 25 percent of our customers are involved in farming and ranching.

I'd also like to comment about our theme for this report, "Pioneering Partnerships." At a time when the world is focusing on the new millennium, some may find it curious to be talking about pioneering. But it's a word that aptly describes the Extension spirit, for Webster's New World Dictionary defines a pioneer as a person who goes before, preparing the way for others; being one of the first of its kind. That attitude has served this organization and its customers well, and it's absolutely essential if Colorado State University Extension is to continue to have a positive impact on Colorado in the next century.

In last year's annual report, I addressed the importance of partnerships. It's a message worth repeating, because without partnerships, Extension would not have access to the vast resources the land-grant university system has to offer. And our customers would not benefit from the timely, research-based information that is the hallmark of Extension programs. But our partnerships extend beyond the university to other state and federal agencies, the business community, and the thousands of individuals who have volunteered countless hours over the past 85 years.

This annual report is a tribute to all our partners who helped us pioneer programs of relevance and excellence -- programs that help thousands of Coloradans realize a better quality of life through stronger families; economically and environmentally sustainable farms, ranches and communities; responsible, productive youth; and a society that cares about and addresses the needs of under-represented populations.

I look forward to the challenges and opportunities the next millennium will bring, because I'm confident Extension will continue to pioneer partnerships and programs that help us connect with the resources necessary to meet the needs of Coloradans -- from the Eastern Plains to the Western Slope.

I hope you enjoy this guided tour around the state!

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Tailoring a village, raising a child

It really does take a village to raise a child and what better example of this than the Latino culture, staunch in its tradition of family and relationships. And who better to learn this lesson than the Colorado State University Extension 4-H staff in Weld County, who have made many attempts to connect with Latino youth.

With direction from Cathy Martinez, Colorado State Extension diversity resource leader, and an advisory council of Latino community leaders, the Extension staff in Weld County found themselves in the middle of tailor-made 4-H programming for Latino youth and their families.

"The idea to attract Latino kids to 4-H began more than a year ago when I met with staff in the state 4-H office who proposed Weld County for a pilot project to increase enrollment to non-traditional 4-H audiences," said Martinez.

Under the direction of the advisory council came suggestions to successfully reach out to the Latino community. They learned to make families part of the planning, provide hands-on activities for youth, overcome the language barrier, be considerate of culture and economics, involve community centers and city recreation programs, and take time to develop trust and relationships.

"Northern Colorado typically isolates races, and most programs sit back and wait for Latino kids to come to them," said Sal Salazar, community activist and council member. "This approach doesn't work with these kids and it's nice to see a program that is willing to reach out to them."

An important step in this process was to choose the best 4-H projects to offer to Latino youth. The 4-H market goat project -- raising, caring for and marketing goats -- was chosen primarily because of the connection the Latin culture has with agriculture. To introduce 4-H and the market goat project to the Latino community, Ed Trevino and sons Colt and Cody, helped set up a display and sold cabritos, barbecue goat tacos, during Cinco De Mayo festivities.

Recruiting youth to participate in the project was another learning experience for 4-H staff, and the traditional application process was another barrier they needed to overcome.

"Relationships and building trust are very important in the Latino community," said Ruben Flores, recreation program manager for the City of Greeley Jesus Rodarte Cultural Center. "After the use of the farm was donated by Richard Carrol, the most successful recruiting we did was to bring the kids out to the farm to spend the day cleaning up the

pens and meeting the 4-H staff." The market goat project's continued success will depend on Extension 4-H youth and livestock agents Keith Maxey and Mark Cronquist in Weld County to find sponsors to donate goats and feed, schedule youth and families to check on the goats daily, and train youth and families to properly care for and feed goats.

The City of Greeley Parks and Recreation has agreed to help coordinate youth recruitment and transportation.

"We're excited about this collaborative effort," said David Sanchez, program manager for City of Greeley Parks and Recreation. "4-H has the project expertise and we are in contact with the target population and can get the kids involved."

Fostering relationships through trust and respect has helped Extension reach and serve Latino youth in Weld County.

Partners in Weld County 4-H Market Goat Project; Richard and Helen Carrol; community activist Sal Salazar; David Sanchez, programs manager, City of Greeley Parks and Recreation; Ruben Flores, recreation program manager, City of Greeley Jesus Rodarte Cultural Center; Ed, Cody and Colt Trevino; Luis Llerena, Jr.; Virginia Guzman; Terrie McKellar; Robert Miller, College of Agricultural Sciences, Colorado State University.

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Interest in fruit Crops blooms in Montezuma and Dolores counties

Fruit trees and vineyards are starting to blossom again with renewed vigor in Montezuma and Dolores counties.

Some longtime residents, as well as newcomers, are working to help rejuvenate a fruit-production industry that once flourished in that area of Colorado. Key partners with the fruit growers are Colorado State University Extension agents in the two counties and the Fruit Tree and Vineyard Research and Demonstration Project, based at the Southwestern Colorado Research Station at Yellow Jacket.

"More and more people are buying old orchard acreages and rejuvenating them or starting over to develop productive orchards," said Jan Sennhenn, director of Colorado State Extension in Montezuma County.

Sennhenn, along with Kenny Smith, Extension agricultural and 4-H youth agent in Montezuma County, and Dan Fernandez, director of the Extension office in Dolores County, collaborate with other fruit researchers from Colorado State to develop and demonstrate management that small-acreage growers can readily apply to their own land.

"In the 1940s and 1950s, Montezuma and Dolores counties had large acreages of fruit trees, mainly apples, but the industry gradually declined. Our project focuses on working with local fruit-industry leaders to help revive the fruit industry," Sennhenn said.

Work being done at the Yellow Jacket Orchard/Vineyard Demonstration Project is designed to give growers practical management information that helps them maximize fruit production.

Many who are revitalizing old orchards are involved in the fruit industry part-time. But others devote full time to their acreages, especially those trying to establish vineyards.

Three members of the Wynes family are among a group of local growers who closely monitor the latest developments from the project. Tim Wynes, his son Jim, and Jim's wife work with 15 irrigated acres and 2,000 trees, half of which are apple. They also grow peaches, pears, apricots and other fruit on their orchard five miles north of Cortez.

Jim Wynes and his wife work full time at other jobs, but Tim is retired and devotes much of his time to upgrading the orchard. The family expects the orchard to bring in extra income, but they also enjoy revitalizing their land, which once was part of a larger orchard.

The Wynes family sells fruit at the local farmer's market and has a pick-your-own operation at the orchard.

Tim and his son regularly attend demonstrations and field days, and Smith and Fernandez have visited the Wynes orchard to demonstrate pruning techniques. "It was amazing. The peaches on those pruned trees grew three times larger than those from trees that hadn't been pruned," Tim Wynes said.

Wynes added that pruning demonstrations at the Yellow Jacket research site, explanations about sprinkler-system irrigation, and instruction on equipment and tools have been especially useful.

"The group from Extension is always available to help us and answer questions," Wynes said. "We've gotten a lot of good information from them."

Since the research and demonstration project began almost eight years ago, approximately 75 new-orchard acres, 60 revitalized acres and one nursery have been developed in the two counties. Two small wineries also are under construction, Sennhenn said.

"As acreages continue to increase in the two counties, our project group has put a priority on finding more ways to market the fruit," Sennhenn added.

In addition to marketing, an emphasis for Extension agents is to update local growers through field days and workshops. A growers' manual, based on information collected from the project, was published last year. The Extension staff also writes news articles that update the public about the project's work and progress.

Partners in Fruit Tree and Vineyard Research and Demonstration Project: Colorado State University Agricultural Experiment Station, Southwestern Colorado Research Center; local fruit growers.

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Yampa Valley: More than a resort mecca

In today's tough agricultural markets, Greg Brown is looking for a profit in sheep's clothing. With the help of C.J. Mucklow, Colorado State University Extension director in Routt County, he might get it.

Brown is one of a handful of wool producers working on Routt County Woolens, a program that helps wool producers benefit from changes in the county that otherwise might compromise their way of life. Increasing tourism and the ski industry have led to high property taxes and disappearing agricultural land in Routt County. Those factors, coupled with a sluggish agricultural market, make it difficult for ranchers in the area to survive. By capitalizing on unique Consumer markets created by those changes, Routt County agriculturists are turning the tables.

"I wanted to see my wool go into something I can identify with," said Brown, who raises about 130 ewes. Through Routt County Woolens, he and a handful of other wool producers in the area send 6,000 pounds of raw wool to a mill in Minnesota that produces high quality, unique blankets. Since 1997, after Mucklow helped design and test the project, about 650 blankets have been sold through the project each year.

The raw wool is among the highest quality available in the west, and the blankets are a unique item that represents the Steamboat Springs area. Locals and tourists covet the blankets as special possessions. The blankets have increased revenue for producers involved in the project – so much so that wool producers in other states are looking at this project as a model, said Mucklow.

In addition to Routt County Woolens, area ranchers are beginning to profit from another inventive program --Yampa Valley Beef. A ranchers' program that markets locally raised beef to area restaurants and residents, Yampa Valley Beef is expected to boost participating ranchers' profits and keep ranching viable. In addition, a portion of the profits from Yampa Valley Beef are donated to a local land trust that preserves and protects open space.

"There's great concern here in Routt County that, for as much love as we have for open lands, we won't be able to have open space unless agriculture is viable," said Arianthe Stettner, Steamboat Springs City Council member and a Yampa Valley Beef customer. "And to keep agriculture viable, there has to be an awareness and appreciation of local agriculture and value-added markets. The community has to have long-term support of agriculture. We've got some of the best agricultural land in the United States.

"Yampa Valley Beef is a great example of the one-dollar effect in the community," said Stettner. "Because of the program, ranchers are able to sell their product locally at a

higher price and the local meat locker processes the meat, adding more money to the area economy."

When Yampa Valley Beef became available in December, 15-pound packages designed for "city slickers," large bundles for restaurants and 30-pound "rancher" bundles were delivered to customers. Many bundles also were shipped out of Routt County as Christmas gifts, or given by businesses to clients.

Mucklow's efforts, said Stettner, have brought people together to successfully work on these two programs and preserve the agricultural lifestyle in Routt County, and that has garnered support from county commissioners, the city council, and the chamber of commerce and economic development council in Steamboat Springs.

Partners in Routt County Woolens and Yampa Valley Beef: Routt County commissioners, Colorado Department of Agriculture, Routt County Wool Pool, Colorado Woolgrowers, City of Steamboat Springs, Routt County Cattlemens Association, Routt County Cattlewomens Association, The Nature Conservancy, Steamboat Springs Chamber and Economic Development Council.

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Putting children first in Chaffee County

When the Chaffee County Children's Task Force held its first meeting in August 1997, the group decided to devote its energies to increasing the quality of life for the county's young children.

The group soon focused on what they determined was one of the county's most critical needs: quality daycare. Task force members rallied support from the public, social service agencies, and business and community leaders. One result has been an increase in the number of licensed daycare providers in the county.

The task force now issues an updated list of childcare providers in the county and is working to further increase the amount and types of childcare services available.

Marti Thomas, chairwoman of the Children's Task Force, said the group also met regularly with daycare workers to discuss training and licensing procedures. Childcare providers joined together to strengthen their professional status by forming the Chaffee County Childcare Association, which also organizes special events to provide clothing and shoes to needy children.

Beverlyn Pepper, family and Consumer science and 4-H youth agent with Colorado State University Extension in Chaffee County, is the task force's liaison with the county's daycare providers.

"Extension and Beverlyn have been incredible during this process," said Thomas. "She's always available for us."

Several forces have come together to create an especially strong demand for childcare in Chaffee County.

First, the Welfare Reform Act of 1997 set a five-year limit on assistance that needy families can receive in a lifetime. As a result, more single parents are entering the job market. Additionally, major employers in Chaffee County -- the prison at Buena Vista, Wal-Mart in Salida, Heart of Rockies Hospital, the Monarch ski resort and related service industries -- need workers round-the-clock and on nights or weekends.

Joyce Hansen, now a licensed daycare provider in Buena Vista, gave up her job at a bank to work in daycare because of the demand in the community for the service, and she enjoys being with children. "I like to have children around and I love the business," she said. When Hansen first began her business, one family used her services. That number has grown to 11.

Hansen said it was convenient and economical to be able to take required classes for her daycare certification license locally through a program initiated by Pepper.

"We encourage everyone to become licensed," Pepper said. "If a provider keeps more than two children from one family, state law requires the provider to be licensed."

Pepper said Colorado has very high standards for licensed daycare providers. "The process takes a minimum of four months to complete, and pre-licensing training wasn't available anywhere in Chaffee County."

Pepper worked with Pat Johnson, Extension child-development specialist at Colorado State, to develop a curriculum guide for 12 hours of pre-licensing training. To become licensed, a person also must complete eight hours of training in infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid. Pepper signed up a local emergency medical technician to teach those courses.

Pepper also walked candidates through the paperwork process, which includes fingerprinting and an FBI check. Once certified, providers then must take an additional six hours of coursework annually to maintain the license. Pepper offers that coursework locally, as well.

Additionally, Social Services in Chaffee County has organized a team, which includes Pepper, to complete a countywide assessment of family and employer needs for childcare. That information will be the basis for further planning.

"Many individuals, groups and agencies worked together to bring better childcare service to Chaffee County," Pepper said. "This truly has been a team effort."

Partners in Children's Task Force: county daycare providers.

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Dove Creek goes live

Most broadcast news anchors are seasoned reporters, wordsmiths who have worked their way to the top after years of experience. But not so at DC TV where the news director squeezes in broadcasts

between school and homework, a scheduling nightmare that plagues few other seventh graders.

When Dan Fernandez decided to start a television station in Dove Creek, a town of 700 tucked in the southwest corner of the state, several students got their big break. A handful of fifth, sixth and seventh graders, including news director Kyle Rice, run the station as part of their 4-H project.

Fernandez, agriculture and 4-H youth agent and county director for Colorado State University Extension in Dolores County, officially launched DC TV on Dec. 15. Funded by grants and donations, Fernandez set up a $50,000 studio just outside his office in the basement of the courthouse. The station features a 24-hour community calendar, weather reports and local and national news for 5,000 residents in Colorado and Utah via cable and UHF.

The Colorado State Extension 4-H youth development program is the perfect umbrella for DC TV. The enthusiasm of the pint-sized camera operators, news director, anchors and weather forecaster is contagious. They gather news off the Internet and at school, write their notes -- they've learned it doesn't look very professional to write notes on their hands, so they use paper now -- and give several evening broadcasts a week. Since the program started, the students have learned a lot about themselves and the joys and frustrations of their newfound fame. "I just want everybody to treat us like regular kids," said sixth-grade student Brennan Banks, news reporter, remembering his life before the fame of DC TV. But along with stardom come critics. "I'm going to have to quit making fun of the Dallas Cowboys, because I keep getting beat up at school," Banks said.

But DC TV is serious business, even to the kids. Kevin Rice, news director Kyle's brother, says they all take their job seriously and act as professional as possible. He and Kyle don't even let sibling squabbles into the studio. "We have rules. We run a TV station," he said. "No cussing, no fighting. It's not like the Jerry Springer show."

They've all improved their speaking and communication skills and have learned to work as a team. "We don't stutter and we watch what we say around people now," said Banks. "Because if you mess up here, 300 people see it."

They've also learned more about the world. Kyle, for example, regularly reads the paper. And they all admit they pay more attention to the news and what's happening in their

community. "You learn how to pay attention to more things at once," said Kyle. "It's fun. We're not bored all the time here. It's something to do and it keeps us out of trouble.

"And it gets you more mature ... sometimes," he adds, tossing a glance at his brother, Kevin, and Banks, who are giggling.

"Our ultimate goal is to have students assume responsibility for station operations," said Fernandez, although his office will maintain management. The high school's school-to-career program also might tap into the station. It's clear that the students currently involved in the station will continue their interest in DC TV for many years. Thanks to Fernandez and the Colorado State Extension 4-H program, several of these young broadcasters aspire to be the next Katie Couric or Peter Jennings, using DC TV as a springboard to career development. They've already realized this experience puts them one step ahead of many others who will have to learn about broadcasting in a classroom, instead of in a real studio.

And, the DC TV crew also has learned from their mistakes. "Dan gives us room to make mistakes," said seventh-grade meteorologist April Garchar. "During one of our first broadcasts, someone was chewing on their microphone. You can see how far we've come since then."

Partners in DC TV: TCI Cable of Durango; Colorado Advanced Technology Institute; Region Nine Economic Development District; Dove Creek State Bank; Town of Dove Creek; Dolores County commissioners; Dove Creek Natural Resource Conservation Service; U.S. Forest Service; Southwest Colorado Translator Association and San Juan Resource Conservation and Development; Dove Creek schools.

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Guiding the future of Baca County

Predicting the future is always difficult, especially when it involves community and economic development. So when Baca County officials needed hard facts to help them answer tough questions about their county's future and its quality of life, they turned to their local Colorado State University Extension staff who connected them to public policy researchers at the university.

The need for facts was prompted by the desire of residents and officials in Baca County to broaden the county's economic base. One possible alternative: encourage a large hog-farming operation to come in.

Eudora West, director of economic development for Baca County, pointed out that the county is composed of communities that want to keep agriculture as the centerpiece of their local economies. "But communities in the county such as Springfield, Walsh, Vilas and Campo also want to diversify their agricultural base and develop more jobs," she said. "One way to diversify is to bring in new agricultural businesses, such as hog or dairy operations, that have a natural association with wheat, corn and sorghum -- the county's major Crops."

West said Baca County farmers and ranchers want their children and grandchildren to remain in the area. But young people need job opportunities if they are to stay. "Some of the young people who have left tell us they would return to Baca County if more jobs were available," she said. "We were trying to decide whether to encourage a large swine-feeding operation to locate in Baca County," West said. "That's obviously a very emotional decision, so we needed to have solid facts and figures."

West and other Baca County officials turned to Tim Macklin, county unit leader with the local Colorado State Extension office in Springfield. Macklin contacted David Cockrell, a Extension community development s3pecialist in Pueblo, who brought in researchers from Colorado State's department of agricultural and resource economics.

As a result of the collaboration, researchers Jennifer Grannis, a graduate research assistant, and Andrew Seidl, assistant professor and Extension economist who specializes in public policy, coauthored a series of policy reports in 1998. Report topics ranged from an examination of the swine industry and community economic development to community and natural resource economic issues associated with the industry.

Grannis and Seidl also discussed their findings at a public meeting in Baca County. In their reports and presentations, the two researchers stressed that introducing a large new business such as a swine operation has social, cultural, economic and natural resource impacts that will change the character of communities.

"Our objective was to help Baca County residents and their representatives evaluate the opportunities and challenges that would result if a large new business moved into the area," Seidl said. "I believe that such an evaluation helps rural communities think about their employment, services and lifestyle goals and weigh those against opportunities for economic development."

As it turned out, Baca County officials and residents didn't have to choose whether to bring in a swine-feeding operation. Two companies looked at the area but decided against building a facility because of low hog prices and the passage of Amendment 14 that modified state regulation of large swine-feeding operations.

"However, the process worked well," Macklin said. "Extension and other university staff worked together to help people in Baca County get solid facts. Now they have the information they need if a similar situation comes up in the future." Macklin added that the studies by Seidl and Grannis also can be used as a model for other rural communities on Colorado's Eastern Plains.

Partners for Baca County confined animal feeding study: Baca County Enterprise Development Commission; Jennifer Grannis, graduate research assistant, Colorado State department of agricultural and resource economics.

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Home on the Front Range often is a small acreage

A huge demand for information at Colorado State University Extension offices on the Front Range indicates that an increasing number of Coloradans want to live in homes located on small acreages. And they need help to successfully manage their land.

"The fastest-growing clientele requesting information at Extension offices located along the Front Range are people with acreages that range from 1 to 70 acres," said Bob Hamblen, Colorado State Extension agronomy and farm management agent, Larimer County. Hamblen and Ann Swinker, associate professor and Extension horse specialist at Colorado State, are state contacts for Extension's Managing Small Acreages program.

The program is designed to help clients who own small acreages, and 35 acres is a common size. Larimer County alone now has more than 2,000 tracts of land from 1 to 70 acres.

Many people who buy small acreages quickly discover they need solid information about soils, grasses, irrigation, water rights, livestock management or a range of environmental issues. "They're thirsty for knowledge," Hamblen said.

The Colorado State Extension office in Larimer County receives 400 to 600 requests annually for small-acreage information. Small-acreage field days regularly attract about 90 people. This high demand for information has cropped up along the entire Front Range and in some mountain communities and areas across the Western Slope.

Hamblen also coordinates Extension's Small-Acreage Management Volunteer Program, which began in 1992 to help satisfy the large number of public requests for information. Volunteers receive 40 hours of training in small-acreage management, then donate 40 hours of work to help answer questions from the public, present talks, teach or write articles. One person with first-hand knowledge about small acreages is Len Roark, a Small-Acreage Management volunteer and a client. Roark built a house five years ago on 35 acres just east of Wellington in northern Colorado.

"Ideally, people should talk to their Extension agent even before they buy land. Most people who purchase a small acreage, especially in a rural area, need to have a better understanding of what they're getting into," he said.

Roark, who is retired from Mountain Bell (US West), is a native Coloradan whose great grandfather homesteaded in Colorado. Before he and his wife moved to Wellington, they lived on a three-acre site west of Denver.

Even though he was interested in agriculture and had lived on a small acreage, Roark had a lot of questions about how to manage his 35 acres. "Shortly after we moved here, I saw an ad in the newspaper for one of the small-acreage workshops," he said. "It sounded like it was just what I needed."

After attending the workshop, Roark signed on as a volunteer. "I've learned a lot as a volunteer, and I apply what I learn to my own acreage."

The questions Roark receives most often as a volunteer pertain to livestock. "Probably the biggest expectations among small-acreage owners are for lush, green pastures and horses. But overgrazing by horses is one of the biggest problems we see," Roark said.

Hamblen pointed out that many clients also are interested in generating income from a small acreage. "At first, owners are happy just to be living on an acreage. Then, they begin to wonder if they can produce income from their land," he said. "We've provided clients with information about starting to raise everything from elk to ornamental plants."

Partners in the Managing Small Acreages program: Colorado Horse Council; Natural Resource Conservation Service; Colorado Department of Agriculture; Colorado Division of Wildlife; Colorado State Forest Service; Small Acreages Management volunteers; Colorado Association of Weed Districts; Northern Colorado Water Conservation District; Association of Soil Conservation Districts; Larimer County Commissioners; Colorado State faculty in the colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Natural Resources, and Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences.

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Making you feel at home: A county commissioner's perspective

Doralyn Genova's roots run deep in Mesa County. "This is my home. I have a real love of this area and a sense of ownership."

Her family goes back three generations in Grand Junction. She was born and raised there and graduated from Grand Junction High School and Mesa State College. For the past 10 years, her commitment to the area has included serving on the three-member board of county commissioners for Mesa County.

As a commissioner, Genova helps determine the future of Mesa County, finds ways to provide public services needed by county residents and works with commissioners from other Western Slope communities.

One of the main challenges in Mesa and adjoining counties is how to cope with rapid growth. Helping her county develop a land-use plan that accommodates growth, but also protects private property rights and preserves and strengthens the area's agricultural tradition, is one of Genova's goals.

"One group that has been especially helpful in developing that plan is Colorado State University Extension," she said. "Nathan Moreng and his staff in the Tri-River Area offices in Grand Junction, Delta and Montrose always come to the table with ideas for us."

Moreng appears regularly before the Mesa County Commissioners to brief them on programs in the Tri-River area, which is composed of Mesa, Delta, Montrose and Ouray counties. Genova said the commissioners from those four counties also participate in budget discussions concerning the Tri-River Area Extension program.

She said Extension also helps many small farmers in the area survive and thrive. "Many of Mesa County's agricultural-related industries are very small. They've come to rely on the services and information from Extension to stay in business."

Additionally, many fruit and wine-grape growers in the area rely on Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Station in Grand Junction for information to help make them more efficient -- and profitable -- growers.

Genova also praised the work of the local Extension staff and the leadership of agent Brent Young in trying to save a local grain mill. In that situation, Farmland Industries announced its intention to close a mill the company owned in Fruita. The Fruit Co-op stepped in and bought the mill and, with Extension, is developing strategies to keep it

open.

"They're looking at new and 'niche' Crops such as weed-free alfalfa that can be grown in the area to take advantage of the mill," she said. "The costs of shipping a crop to a processor out of state would eat up our farms. In situations like this, we turn to the Extension office for advice. That saves tax-payer dollars."

However, the local Extension office doesn't limit its help to just agricultural-related topics. "Their activities touch all aspects of the county," she said. Genova cited the office's commitment to youth through the 4-H program and service to the community through such programs as Master Gardeners. She also noted educational efforts to improve nutritional health through Extension's family and Consumer science programs. "And, our citizens can call that office to get their questions about many different topics answered."

"Extension is important to the quality of life in our county. Its service to Mesa County is greatly appreciated and very beneficial," Genova said.

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Seniors see results by learning about nutrition

Eight stories up, Jo Gibson has a grand view of the world. For nine years she has literally looked down on everything around her and that has given her a broad perspective on a lot of things.

From her apartment window and the bird's-eye view it gives her, Gibson and her good friend, Rose Williams, recently assisted the Pueblo Police Department with apprehension of a bank robber. Alerted by a police scanner that their neighborhood bank had been robbed, one of them kept an eye on the suspect's movements down on the ground, while the other called the police and directed them to the suspect's location where he was quickly apprehended. While, really, it was all in a day's work, the ladies are proud of the citation they received from local law-enforcement officials commending their citizen participation.

That's about how exciting each day is for Gibson and her companions in the 14-story high rise where 215 apartments house limited-resource, ethnically diverse seniors. When they aren't helping capture bank robbers or celebrating at Bronco victory parties, they often are participating in classes with Colorado State University Extension's Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program.

The goal of FSNEP is simple: help limited-resource audiences eat healthier at lower food cost. Colorado State Extension provides the nutrition and food resource management program through federal and state dollars that reach into 22 rural and urban counties. To Jo, Rose, Smitty, Peg and friends, this means they have gained valuable skills from the local FSNEP nutrition classes.

"I have learned so much," Gibson said. "I learned how to read food labels, so now I take my time when I shop -- and I read everything. It has helped lower my blood pressure because I watch for products low in sodium and sugar and high in nutrients."

For a year now, since the classes began, she not only studies product labels at the grocery store, she exercises through a water-aerobics class with several friends.

"The class is tough," she states. "The instructor really works us to death." But she knows these things have contributed to her lower blood pressure and good reports at the doctor's office. "I feel like I'm in control of my health," she said. "The FSNEP program has really helped some of my friends with high cholesterol and diabetes. Another friend, whose husband had undergone heart by-pass surgery, thought the program was great because it helped her create a menu plan for him."

Gibson, who was born and raised in New York City, moved to Colorado in 1959 with her

husband and two small children. The spunk and resilience she inherited back in Brooklyn from her Spanish mother and her Puerto Rican father, a chef at the Waldorf Astoria, are still evident in her energy level and leadership role among the apartment dwellers.

Gibson cooks for herself and says she is always looking for creative things to do with fruits and vegetables. "I still eat a lot of rice and beans like we did at home," she said. "But now I know they are really good for you because they equal a complete protein," she jokes with Ginger Lenzmeier, FSNEP agent in Pueblo County.

"We have a good time with this nutrition stuff. Ginger makes it fun and easy to learn," Gibson said. "My eating habits have changed and I know those of us in the program have learned to eat better. My most important lesson was learning to pay attention to those food labels," she said. "I now use my dollars better at the grocery store so they can stretch for all those other things I want to do."

Partners in EFNEP: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Colorado State University Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition; Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program; local organizations including Azteca Senior Apartments, Pueblo.

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1998 Annual Report

Gardening for life: A growing success

Martha Deitz first recognized the power of plants when she was educational director with the Grand Prairie Rebound Program in Colorado Springs, an alternative lockdown and treatment facility for young men.

Last year, she brought young men in leg irons to Colorado State University Extension's Gardening for Life workshops to learn about plants and Gardening. It turned out the young men were far more enthusiastic about horticulture than anyone expected. In fact, they were influenced enough by what they learned to take on the task of researching and designing a greenhouse for the Grand Prairie facility.

Deitz said they also learned skills they can use in a job or just for enjoyment as they move on to life after they leave the facility. "The workshops were a fabulous setting. The young men encountered many different types of people, and they were treated with dignity and respect," Deitz said.

"I know the workshops gave them a whole new world to think about," Deitz emphasized. "In fact, one of the young men who attended a workshop now works at a greenhouse in Washington state." The basis of Gardening for Life -- an effort of the Extension office staff and Advanced Master Gardener volunteers in El Paso County -- is horticultural therapy. The program's personal impacts that Martha Deitz saw aren't unusual. Research studies show that Gardening activities have the potential to improve a person's social, educational, psychological and physical well-being. Horticultural therapists design Gardening activities to help mentally or physically disabled persons as well as individuals with special needs.

The benefits of Gardening can range from relaxation to lowered stress, improved social interaction, mental stimulation or increased self-esteem.

Advanced Master Gardeners in Colorado Springs first dabbled in horticultural therapy 15 years ago. But it wasn't until recently that the therapy program really blossomed, when the Master Gardeners explored specific areas of interest. Under the leadership of Linda Smith, they selected horticultural therapy. Smith, an administrative assistant in the Extension office in El Paso County, was a Master Gardener participant when the group made its selection. Twenty-five volunteers took on the task of developing the program.

"As planning got underway, the group realized that its major strength was horticulture, not therapy," said Smith. "So the group decided to offer workshops that would help train professional therapists, caregivers, teachers and others in basic horticulture. In turn, the professionals decided how to best apply their knowledge to fit their clients' needs," she

said. The five-week series provides 20 hours of education. Information offered in the workshops is valuable to professionals such as caregivers and rehabilitation specialists, as well as to the Gardening public. Workshops focus on the basics of growing plants and include easy-to-understand information, audience participation, hands-on activities and useful handouts.

"Our workshops have had a noticeable impact," Smith said. "At first, we expected we would be presenting instruction only to specialists or family members who provide caregiving of some type. Now it's becoming common for us to give our presentations directly to students, patients and others who attend workshops with their counselor, therapist or teacher."

About 160 people have attended the workshops so far. "Eleven people attended in 1996, which was our first year," Smith said. "Now, we fill the room with more than 40 people every time we offer a workshop."

"It's gratifying to the Master Gardeners to see the effects the workshops have," Smith said. "We're seeing men and women with physical or emotional needs improve their attitudes, behaviors or skills through Gardening, and applying those new attitudes to other aspects of their lives. It truly is 'Gardening for Life.'"

Partners in Gardening for Life: area Master Gardener volunteers.

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