



## The Power of Partnerships: 1999 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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### **Message from the director**

This 1999 Annual Report highlights some of the educational program partnerships of Colorado State University Extension. As an integral part of Colorado State University, Extension is committed to implementing the University's land-grant mission, which is to offer accessible higher education, to conduct research, and to provide public service to citizens of the state. Extension's role and connection within the higher education system provides the public with access to knowledge that can improve their daily lives. Extension faculty facilitate outreach partnerships across the institution to respond to local needs, assist in the translation and application of research, make connections between communities and resources, and deliver programs to support lifelong learning and problem-solving at the community level.



Extension engages a responsive network of citizens, scientists and educators who can address individual and community issues and problems through research-based knowledge. This powerful partnership makes a connection between the intellectual knowledge of the University and the people of Colorado.

In a growing state, there are increasing citizen needs for information and educational programs that address critical social, economic and environmental issues. The growing need to address agricultural and natural resource issues, Consumer and family problems, youth development challenges, and community concerns represents a continuing challenge for Extension. As part of this balancing act, Extension has focused its limited resources on seven statewide priority programs:

- Engaging Communities in Transition
- Enhancing Families and Communities
- Improving Nutrition, Food Safety and Health
- Managing Small Acreages
- Partnering for Green Colorado
- Strengthening Youth Development
- Sustaining Agriculture and the Environment

In this report, we present examples of Extension's important connection to our customers, cooperators and collaborators throughout the state. Our partnerships with local advisory committees and councils is also vitally important to Extension's success and accomplishment of its mission. The Colorado Extension Advisory Council composed of 18 Coloradans and led by Chair Tom Watley, Littleton, provides invaluable input and advice to Extension's dynamic program plans and educational direction. Also, validation of stakeholder input is an important requirement of Extension's federal partner.

We are especially proud of the connections through our 4-H Youth Development Program

that impacted more than 144,000 Colorado youth last year. Most of this increase--from 98,560 in 1997 and 130,591 in 1998--results from our K-12 partnerships which involve youth in school enrichment and after-school experiences. The 4-H Club Program has experienced growth as well, and continues to be an important foundation for 4-H youth development efforts in Colorado.

The final implementation steps of Extension 2000, an effort that focused Extension toward the new century, was a unique success completed this past year. Its implementation was based on input from advisory committee members, faculty, Consumers and other stakeholders. An integral part of CE2000 was the revision of Extension's Strategic Plan for Diversity and the development of a Diversity Action Plan. Implementation of these efforts will assure that Extension programs address the diversity and variety of Colorado issues and audiences.

In addition to accomplishments on its seven program plans, Extension, in collaboration with the Colorado Agricultural Experiment Station, successfully launched research and educational programs on high priority water and farm/ranch management issues. Future joint efforts will address issues of community growth, land use and related public concerns--critical issues as Colorado continues as the fifth fastest growing state in the nation.

As Extension staff continue their work representing the land-grant university at the local level, they face increased demands for community education. Extension information is seen as a source people can trust. Stakeholders and decision makers often mention that our research/science base is critical to balanced decision-making and problem solving.

Please contact me if you have questions or comments about Extension educational programs or the information we provide. We look forward in this new century to continuing our powerful partnership with the citizens of Colorado.

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### **Youth Believe in Community Pride**

4-Hers in Pueblo know recycling up close.

Drawers, bins, boxes and bags all over Pueblo County are overflowing with coupons, pop-tops, stamps, cards, phone books, and who knows what else. If there is an organizational or community need somewhere, Dolores Vaccaro, a volunteer with Colorado State University Extension's 4-H youth development program, has found a way to match human time and energy with "recycled stuff" to support these worthy causes.



Vaccaro began her interest in volunteering years ago when her niece was first involved in 4-H. She became a 4-H project leader and guided her niece, and later, her own grandchild through the art of cooking and baking. In fact, she has "led" hundreds of kids through her kitchen of culinary learning over the last 25 years through her involvement in 4-H. She also believes a volunteer should "volunteer"--she serves as the community service leader for her 4-H club--a combined group of Livewires and Needle Beetles!

Vaccaro's longtime friend, Mary Smith, has been involved in 4-H even longer--a total of 45 years. She currently is the organizational leader for the 34 kids from age eight to 18 in the Needle Beetles/Livewires 4-H Club. In addition to meeting the organizational needs of the club, she also is their project leader in the areas of sewing, crocheting, heritage arts, "decorate your duds," child care, and ceramics--subjects she loves to teach--and she is a Extension Master Gardener. She said she got interested in 4-H volunteer work when her own kids were young.

"I enjoy working with kids, seeing them grow up," she said. "I was a pediatric nurse, and I served as a Girl Scout leader and a Cub Scout leader before I got involved as a 4-H leader. I think that 4-H is the best thing that kids can get into!"

An important component of 4-H that both Vaccaro and Smith think kids should "get into" is community service. Members of the Livewires/Needle Beetles 4-H Club have a longstanding tradition of balancing work on 4-H projects with involvement in "Community Pride" projects. These projects have allowed 4-Hers of all ages to become connected to a need in the community and to use their newfound skills of decision-making, record-keeping, organizing and volunteering to make an impact on that need.

Their list of ongoing community service contributions includes collecting coupons from magazines and newspapers to supplement Meals on Wheels and elderly feeding programs; saving canceled stamps for Bethel Hospital-St. Elizabeth Foundation in West Germany for mentally and physically challenged residents; putting together bags of personal items for migrant workers; collecting reusable note cards for the residents of St. Jude's Hospital

in Denver; and gathering and recycling telephone books and saving tab-tops from aluminum cans for the "Tabs for Tots" program to support the Ronald McDonald House.

And on their accomplishment list: they made cookie baskets for the El Pueblo Boys and Girls Ranch; made valentines for the southern Colorado Veterans Association; provided food products for Thanksgiving baskets for local churches; gathered toys and put them in 4-H-built toy boxes for Denver's Children's Hospital; cooked for the homeless at the local Wayside Mission shelter; held bake sales and other fund-raisers to support the care of an injured red-tailed hawk at the local Raptor Center; dug, cleaned up, painted, planted and labored over a wheelchair-accessible nature trail and greenway project at the Pueblo Nature Center during Earth Day.

And there's more.

More than a year ago, the Pueblo 4-Hers began a campaign to collect new and used books for a county-wide reading program that involved local elementary schools, the library, the University of Southern Colorado, and the nearby communities of Fountain and Trinidad. Ten months later, at Halloween time, their "Make a Difference Reading Program" had collected 1700 used and new books to give to area children in kindergarten through fifth grade, and older 4-Hers were involved in reading programs all over the county, distributing the books and encouraging kids to read.

For their community efforts they have been recognized with a Chevron-sponsored Colorado Community Pride Award, a "Colgate Youth for America Campaign" award, and a "Make a Difference Day" award from the Paul Newman Foundation that added \$2,000 to their most recent project. This one was spearheaded by four of the Needle Beetles and Livewires older 4-H members, who have been instrumental in providing the youth leadership and momentum for many of the clubs' community efforts.

Melanie Bruce, 17, Gwynn Coatney, 17, Jonthan Garnett, 19 and Michael Garnett, 16, all have been participants in many Community Pride projects over the years, but they found their most recent community spirit endeavor one of their larger learning experiences. They wanted their 4-H clubs to be involved in the \$12-million community initiative to construct and beautify 26 acres of a river walk--Pueblo's Historic Arkansas River Project (HARP)--by providing trees, shrubs and decorative banners. This turned out to be an expensive undertaking at best--thousands of dollars were required for each mature tree in the plan, and \$2500 for a flag, pole and plaque.

Undaunted, they learned grant writing--and succeeded with a National 4-H Council grant sponsored by Metropolitan Life (\$1,000) and the Coors Foundation (\$750)--conducted fund raisers and solicited donations from club leaders, parents, Master Gardeners, Family and Community Education members, and service clubs. Combined with a match from the Pueblo County 4-H Foundation, the group presented a \$4,100 check to HARP last summer in the name of Pueblo County 4-H for one of eight large historic banners that will fly over the completed project. They also helped with planting and landscaping along the new walk.

"Seeing your results makes you want to do more," said Melanie about her participation in community projects. "In 4-H, to do your best, you give it your all."

"I got so much from 4-H and the people who worked with me that it is nice to give something back to the community," summed up Jonthan's feelings, and his brother Michael said, "Helping the community makes you feel good yourself."

"There is so much more to 4-H than animals," said Gwynn, "The things we learned through community service are hard to get out of a manual."

The leaders agree.

Vaccaro said, "Kids are part of the community and they should be aware of the less fortunate and those who need to be helped. They should be as involved as they can be in bettering their communities."

*Photo Cutlines:* Energetic Pueblo 4-Hers (front from left) Melanie Bruce and Gwynn Coatney, (back from left) Michael Garnett and Jonthan Garnett, have been active partners in a variety of Community Pride projects over the years.

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## 1999 Annual Report

### **Vision in Action**

Colorado's breathtaking scenery, wide-open spaces and pastoral settings have untold value—to the state's residents, visitors, agriculturists...and developers.

Definition of this value depends on who you ask, but if you ask the members of the Western Slope coalition called AgriVision 20/20, you'll get a passionate answer!

A group of western Colorado leaders, including Brent Young, agricultural marketing agent for Extension in the Tri River area (Delta, Mesa, Montrose & Ouray counties), recognized what they thought was a disturbing trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s.



"Agricultural land was disappearing at an alarming rate in neighboring resort counties," said Young. "In fact, it happened so fast that agricultural land was gone in about 10 years." He knew that the trend of disappearing agricultural land probably would be repeated in the counties he worked in. Large tracts of land, held for generations in ranches and farms that preserve open-space and wildlife habitat, were being sold to capitalize on rising property values.

"We were seeing double-digit growth in the area. Farm land and open space were being subdivided, a number of support agribusinesses had gone by the wayside, and we were getting close to losing our ability to have a sustainable agriculture," said Young.

Young, a person whom many credit with bringing the growth issue to the public's attention, along with his Extension colleagues, Robbie Baird-LeValley, Extension livestock agent, and Wayne Cooley, Extension agronomy agent, decided to take action. They began organizing a series of public meetings among farmers and ranchers, county commissioners and economic development groups in the Tri-River Area. With the Delta-Montrose Area Vocational-Technical Center as a partner, Extension launched AgriVision 20/20 at a conference in March 1997.

Since then, a number of economic councils, economic development associations, land conservancies, agricultural cooperatives, city and county governments including Mesa and Ouray, have joined AgriVision 20/20, whose goal is to help protect the remaining farm and ranch land in the area. Another powerful ally that embraced the effort is American Farmland Trust, a non-profit group that works nationally to prevent agricultural land from being taken out of production. The group has almost 20 years experience in securing easements and educating the public about the benefits of protecting farm land.

"Extension agents and other leaders knew they needed to get their arms around what was

happening to the agricultural economy and the impact that growth was having on agricultural lands in that dynamic region," said Jeff Jones, AFT's Rocky Mountain field director. "They found out the community was really interested in protecting agricultural land, and that stabilizing the land base was important to keeping a viable economy."

"Agriculture obviously needs to be profitable for farmers and ranchers to hold onto their land and pass it on to their children," Young said.

So with that issue in mind, the AgriVision 20/20 approach to preserving agricultural land had three components—develop strategies to increase profitability for farmers and ranchers, promote voluntary land-preservation methods, and increase awareness of the issue among the non-agricultural public.

Since its inception, AgriVision 20/20--the agencies and organizations that make up the coalition--have produced concrete results. The organization promotes voluntary land conservation, value-added opportunities and other more profitable options for agricultural producers. They recently received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Fund for Rural America to find ways to improve the profitability of the livestock industry in Delta, Mesa and Montrose counties, as well as Logan County in northeastern Colorado. The first year of the grant was spent on a feasibility study focused on use of facilities near Delta for a packing plant that could process meat from domestic animals and exotic species such as elk. That approach proved unworkable; however, the Montrose Economic Development Council studied other options, which included building a new packing plant, using Swedish technology to develop a portable facility, or developing a modular facility. Additionally, the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union examined the potential of a regional packing plant that would process meat from animals shipped in from all over Colorado and parts of New Mexico and Wyoming.

Other efforts are also underway. One is a study of the possibility of converting a mill in Fruita into a facility to process oil from grain seeds. The main product from that operation would be industrial motor oils. Another effort involves a Western Sugar Company study of the possibility of revitalizing the area's sugar-beet industry.

Young pointed out the unique aspect of agricultural production in the four-county area. "The value of agriculture and agricultural land--especially in Mesa County-- is in the unique climate and soils that allow fruit orchards and vineyards to grow," he said. "You can't grow peaches just anywhere." He also noted the area's ability to produce high-quality crop seeds. "Our low humidity suppresses water-borne disease and allows plants to produce disease-free seeds for the next crop."

Jones said, "Extension has been an amazing ally in this effort. I am so impressed with the Extension agents--they have made such a difference in our ability to do our job. The big picture of what AgriVision is providing is a great framework to build from in that region. Observing how it evolves can help the American Farmland Trust replicate that process in other communities that are losing agricultural land."

Young stressed that the most important reason to keep a vibrant agricultural economy in the Tri River Area is for the quality of life. "Losing our agricultural land means losing open space, natural resources and habitat--our way of life."

*Photo Cutline:* The goal of AgriVision 20/20--a partnership of agricultural groups, economic councils, land conservancies, and city and county governments in Colorado's Tri River Area--is to help protect and preserve farm and ranch land in the area.. The team of Extension agents and other leaders--including (left to right) Robert Bleiberg, Mesa County Land Conservancy, Susan Hanson, Delta County Administrator, Brian Mullor, American Farmland Trust, Mary Chapman, liaison to AFT, Jeff Jones, Rocky Mountain field director for American Farmland Trust, and Extension agents Robbie Baird-LeValley and Brent Young--are credited with bringing community awareness to the plight of the



agricultural economy and the impact that growth was having in that region.

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### **"Extension's Always Been a Part of This Place"**

The "Window Sash Ranch," located in the middle of the mountain plateau that is the San Luis Valley and surrounded in the distance by the San Juan Mountains, is situated on land that sustains not only creosote bush, yucca and jackrabbits, but also the fresh air and prairie grass that nourishes prize-winning cattle.



This family-owned operation, located north of Center, Colo., has been ahead of its time since Frank Lobato began breeding cattle in the early 1970s. And ranching has been in the family since Frank's great grandparents homesteaded in the Valley five generations ago. In 1953 Frank started his first operation on land adjacent to the ranch's current location.

Frank built this successful commercial cow/calf business—now being managed by his sons, Anthony and Michael—on a three-way maternal cross-breeding system using Red Angus, Limousin and Gelbvieh cattle breeds. He was among the first in this area to use artificial insemination (A.I.) and an elaborate record-keeping system that has enabled him to quantify the genetic progress he's made over the years.

"Dad started in this business with a pure production goal," Anthony said. "He averaged an increase in weaning weights from 450 to 620 pounds on each steer at that time. He was one of the initial participants in Colorado State University's Beef Improvement Program, which added heritability to his production indexes. This index, known as the Most Probable Producing Ability (MPPA), gave him a way to evaluate all his cows on an equal footing. Then he began to discover those breed mixtures with outstanding performance and productivity over time."

"The University and Extension have always been a part of this operation," Anthony said.

Using information from Colorado State University's cross-breeding and A.I. research, a sophisticated record-keeping system from the University of Wyoming, and local Extension assistance with educational programs on such topics as reproductive soundness, estrus synchronization, and weighing and evaluating cattle, Frank, who is now 71, became a local pioneer in the beef-breeding business.

"We've always appreciated the unbiased information and suggestions for our operation from our local Extension agents," Anthony said. Those included former livestock agent Larry Brown and current agent Marvin Reynolds, who said the Lobatos "have always been able to gather and weigh Extension information to enhance their operation."

Anthony noted, "Years ago, Extension's Ranch Management School taught us that keeping records on each animal's breed and individual production is key, and gave us a

better way to do business analysis. Because of our precise reproductive records-- the long-term data we've collected--our ability to do business analyses, which we now have all computerized, we transitioned about seven years ago to a Black Angus, Maine-Anjou and Black Gelbvieh cross."

This three-way mixture provides high performance and weaning weights, and more importantly, it results in the specialized breed of "club calves" or show animals the Window Sash is known for. The attractive dark-brown cattle are expertly raised, individually cared for--and separately marketed to eliminate the middleman in this highly competitive industry.

"We look more at each cow's income-producing ability, not just her production," Michael said. They want each of their steers, bulls and heifers to bring value to, and make money for, the next owner--through productivity, breeding quality and performance. They also offer follow-up services to their buyers, including management advising, A.I. services and showmanship, "to enhance profitability for the next guy," Anthony said.

"We want to make a big impact on the beef industry." Anthony emphasized. "We want our 20 to 30 bulls to multiply by 20 or 30 more quality animals each year."

In order to do this, Michael spends most of his summer and fall on the road doing the individual matchmaking of animals with buyers. His efforts at marketing the cattle at county and state fairs and special events, along with a new venture of marketing cattle semen to operators around the country, pays off in a successful ranching operation.

The Window Sash supports three Lobato families, including Frank and Eva, son Anthony and his wife Denise and their two children, Taylor and Alexa, and son Michael and his wife Renee and their two children, Nicholas and Jordan. The rest of the family--four other sons and daughters--have lives away from the ranch, but gather together several times a year. One of those times is branding and the ranching tradition that centers around that event. "It's a lot of work," Anthony noted. "But we have a lot of fun!"

As far as the ranch management, Michael does the legwork, Anthony does the computer work, and Frank still gives advice. And they all do the cattle work--feeding, A.I., calving--all of it.

Anthony serves on the Board of Directors for the San Luis Valley Cattlemen's Assoc., on the SLV Extension Advisory Council and is chair-elect of the Colorado Extension Advisory Council. Michael has dedicated years to helping kids with junior livestock projects and has served as Regional Fair Board president and member. Renee is the Fair Board manager.

"Dad was on the local Extension Advisory Council, too," Anthony said. "Extension has always been a part of this place."

*Photo Cutline:* Ranching has been in the Lobato family since Anthony's (left) and Michael's great-great grandparents homesteaded in the San Luis Valley five generations ago. Today Colorado State University's Research and Extension partnership continues to support local enterprises like the Window Sash Ranch.

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### **Celebrating 30 Years of Community Nutrition**

Julena Uecke has seen first-hand that the nutrition program she teaches can make a significant impact on the lives of low-income families in Colorado.



"Extension's Food and Nutrition Education Program has a great track-record in showing participants that they can be successful, and it gives them a boost of confidence. After successfully completing the nutrition program that helps them learn how to eat well on a limited budget, many of them make additional changes in their lives. Some go back to school, get a good job or even begin a business," she said.

Uecke is describing the impacts of one of Extension's Nutrition Programs also known as EFNEP, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary. Uecke is an EFNEP educator who provides the Extension nutrition programs in Moffat, Rio Blanco and Routt counties in western Colorado. EFNEP serves women and men who are classified as low-income, and who are responsible for children under 19 years old living in their home.

Every year for the past 30 years, Colorado EFNEP has reached between 500 to more than 1,400 adults and 1,000 to 7,000 children. During 1999 alone, the program graduated 1,000 adults and 4,000 children. Four years ago, EFNEP was joined by FSNEP (The Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program). The two programs are known jointly as Extension Nutrition Programs and, together, they're available in half of all Colorado counties.

One of the efforts that staff in both nutrition programs are focusing on is reaching into the communities where they work, at both the agency and individual levels. "Collaborating with other organizations that serve this population enhances the outreach and impact potential of all the programs," said Karen Wilken, state EFNEP coordinator. "The whole becomes more than the sum of the parts, and the customer is the beneficiary."

Most EFNEP participants are on government assistance programs. While other agencies provide food and services, EFNEP focuses on knowledge and skills to help reduce malnutrition and assists clients and their families to become self-sufficient.

Uecke, one of a number of EFNEP educators located at Extension offices throughout Colorado, leads the eight-week program in which students learn how to read food labels carefully, shop effectively, improve food safety and prepare nutritious meals on a limited budget. The program has strong evaluation, which show that the vast majority of EFNEP graduates learn skills that help them make healthy food choices while saving money on food costs; most participants save an average of \$50.80 a month on their food bill, which gives them extra discretionary dollars, an important issue for limited resource families.

"One of EFNEP's major goals is to teach participants how to make every penny count,"

said Wilken,. "They don't have enough money to make poor choices."

"By reading labels carefully, our students discover that many prepared foods consist of nothing more than a basic ingredient and a few seasonings," Uecke said. "They find out they can easily prepare that same food at home much more cheaply than buying it in a box or can."

One of the main motivations for clients to participant is to help improve the lives of their children by feeding them more nutritious meals, which promotes good health and normal development. But the classes often have the additional benefit of showing participants that they can increase self-sufficiency and control of their lives.

"Our class often is the first time they've ever had to set up a budget, and that gives them a feeling of control," Uecke points out. "In a more general sense, the classes actually are life-skills instruction."

But even experienced women and men can learn valuable lessons in the classes, according to EFNEP graduate Diana Daley of Craig, Colo.

"I learned much more than I expected," she emphasized. "At first, I wasn't too sure about the value of EFNEP classes. I'm a good cook, and I know a lot about preparing food. But I was floored by what I learned," she said. "I feel that my family and I are eating better, and I'm more confident about what I'm doing. I was sad when the program was over. I looked forward to going."

Many of the EFNEP participants' comments reflect their unqualified enthusiasm for the value of the instruction. One EFNEP graduate wrote, "These are the most wonderful classes I've taken. These classes should be taught to all parents in the United States," and another wrote, "Being educated with EFNEP has made a dramatic change in my life choices. I feel that [now] I have the right to make better choices for my family."

And, as happens often with instructional situations, teachers get as much from the classes as students. "One of the most attractive aspects about being an EFNEP instructor is when you see that you're having a significant impact on people's lives," Uecke said. "That's a good feeling."

Uecke is well qualified to understand her students' needs. She earned an associate's degree in nutrition and at one time was a young, single mother trying to stretch food dollars to feed her children. "I think it helps my effectiveness as a teacher when students know that I understand the situation that many of them are facing," Uecke said. "Now I'm trying to make it easier for them."

*Photo Cutline:* EFNEP graduate Diana Daley of Craig, Colo., said of her participation in EFNEP classes, "I learned much more than I expected. At first, I wasn't too sure about the value of the classes. I'm a good cook, and I know a lot about preparing food. But I was floored by what I learned. I feel that my family and I are eating better, and for less money."

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### **In a "Mini-Society®" Kids Do What They Do Best**

No one ever got rich off of a bake sale, but every good entrepreneur has to start somewhere, and it helps if you have some guidance and fun along the way.

In the spring of 1999, the Colorado State University Extension 4-H Youth Development Program initiated a workforce preparation program called "Mini-Society®" in five Colorado counties. The Mini-Society program, funded by the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership, was designed to teach children what it means to be an entrepreneur through the context of a child's world. With direction from a trained teacher, kids participate in activities and are encouraged to do what they do best--make-believe.



With a grant of \$20,000 from the E. M. Kauffman Foundation, Jan Carroll, Extension 4-H specialist and project director, took up the challenge to present Mini-Society, traditionally presented in school settings, through after-school programs and to at-risk children.

The children's first requirement is to pick a name for their "mini society" and design a flag and currency. Once the foundation is laid, kids break into groups or companies and come up with a product or service they can sell to build their country's commerce. Through the 10-week program, children learn about target markets, market surveys, risk taking, competition, how to promote their business, get along with partners, develop a business plan, and keep records of sales and expenses.

Jan Nixon, director of the Extension Office in Logan County, established Mini-Society programs through the Sterling School District After-School Program and Kidz Ark, a youth residential treatment center. In both settings, Nixon set the parameters for the new business partnerships—"to be successful you have to have teamwork and cooperation."

"As an instructor for Mini-Society, we looked for teachable moments with each group of children," Nixon said. "When conflict came up, we helped the kids use the problem to help them learn about business and find the solution. In one of our classes, the group decided they didn't feel the person they hired to be treasurer was taking the job serious enough, so they 'fired' him and found a replacement."

Youth in both the After-School and Kidz Ark programs, set up their businesses, decided what their product would be, how much it would cost to make, and how much they had to charge to make a profit. In the After-School Program, the children made and sold their goods in a sale they set up in the gymnasium. The proceeds gave them money to spend at an auction at the end of the program. The youth at Kidz Ark sold their food in a restaurant setting and their crafts in a "store."

"Our kids decided to sell hand tatoos and "bugs," paint faces, and make paper airplanes and posters," said Kathy Kissler, director of the After-School Program. "When the bugs died, the group of boys who sold them had to decide how they were going to adjust their plan and replace their product."

As with any business, competition became a reality in Mini-Society and the youth had to learn how to scout the competition while managing their own profit margins.

"The kids couldn't help but notice when other groups were more successful with sales. To compete, some of them used the same idea but in a different way and the kids had to decide, as a society, if this was fair business," Kissler said.

The circumstances that brought some of the youth to Kidz Ark, made them a good match for an entrepreneur program. "Some of them are all too familiar with the real world and they aren't afraid to take risks. They are survivors," said Linda Littlefield, Kidz Ark administrative director.

"Our goal at Kidz Ark is to give the girls some of the tools they'll need to operate on their own when they get older and leave our center," Littlefield said. Mini-Society proved to be a good match for the girls at Kidz Ark. "It gave them insight into how society really functions and helped us teach them some real life skills."

Nixon noted that like any new program, Mini-Society had its shares of surprises and adjustments.

"What surprised us the most about this program was how much the girls liked the program," said Dotty Barrera, Kidz Ark teacher's aide. "The girls don't always like what they have to do; they complain about everything. With Mini-Society, each one was given a job--some girls knitted blankets, some made and sold sandwiches. They worked together, got along and didn't fight, which can be an issue here."

Experience is always the best teacher. Extension, through its partnerships to deliver programs like Mini-Society, was able to provide first-hand experience of what it means to work together and become self-sufficient. These targeted educational efforts helped youth learn while doing what they do best--being creative and having fun.

*Photo Cutline:* Through an Extension partnership with a Logan County After-School Program, elementary-aged children participated in the Mini-Society program, funded by the Kauffman Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. Megan, Francis, William and Ben (left to right) learned that it takes teamwork to run a business--even from a youth point of view.

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### **Massive Efforts Halt an Airborne Enemy**

When you buy a spud at the grocery store, you might not think about where it came from. Chances are, however, you're purchasing a product of Colorado. Colorado ranks second in the nation for fresh market potato production.

Most of those potatoes come from the ground of the San Luis Valley—they're big business there. Approximately 90 percent of the Colorado crop is grown in this south central part of the state, making potatoes the number-one agricultural industry—and providing the majority of jobs—in the Valley. Potato fields cover 77,000 acres and produce 30 million 100-pound bags each year with a market value of \$117 million.



"Until recent years, potatoes have been relatively painless to grow in the San Luis Valley," said Richard Zink, Colorado State University Extension potato specialist.

Because of its arid, isolated conditions, the San Luis Valley had the distinction of being the only potato production area in the United States free of late blight. But during the 1998 growing season this distinction and the competitive advantage it afforded local growers was swept away in August when late blight was detected. Potato late blight is a disease that, without the proper response, can potentially destroy all the Valley's potato crop within a few days. That threat now looms each season.

Phil Smartt, owner of Blue Sky Farms near Monta Vista, had raised potatoes in the Valley since 1977, before the late blight was a concern. When symptoms of the blight showed up in the area two years ago, Smartt, and every potato farmer there, had to make drastic adjustments in their production methods. Extension helped develop an educational campaign in an effort to slow the spread of the disease from field to field and from vine to tubers.

Now, potato farmers, scientists and professional crop consultants scour fields daily during the summer and early fall, when the blight begins to show. When they aren't painstakingly searching for the tell-tale dead spots on a leaf, they're undertaking preventative methods to avoid a breakout. Once the blight starts, it can spread on a breeze for several miles, infecting every acre of potatoes in its path within a short time.

Because the blight spreads so quickly, daily reports are critical to every farmer's success. What was once a relatively low-maintenance crop to grow has become expensive and exhausting. Potato farmers have always sprayed their Crops with fungicides, but, before, the applications were minimal—about once or twice a season. Now, from July until September's harvest, farmers undertake an aggressive program of preventive fungicide



applications, spraying as often as every week to protect their Crops from an outbreak of late blight. When it does appear--and it will make annual calls--the fungicide will make the disease spread less quickly and less densely, causing less damage.

Valley farmers like Smartt turned to Extension for help in keeping ahead of the devastating disease.

"There are other sources to turn to for information about the blight," said Smartt. "But Extension has a lot to give to the community, and they make information very available. They have the educational background, expertise and experience to help us fight the blight. I enjoy working with them...and I trust them."

Zink has a community-wide communication system in place to alert farmers about a blight outbreak and its severity. The blight can't be prevented or treated; it can only be controlled by timely fungicide applications. Quick and accurate communication about the general location and extent of an outbreak can mean the difference between a profit and a total loss for a farmer.

Zink is also working in the community to start a composting service to give farmers a safe place to dispose of blight-infected potatoes. Composting destroys the fungus that causes late blight.

"When you look across the whole industry in Colorado, you see that producers are spending about \$15 million each year to prevent a late-blight disaster," said Zink. "Extension has put together a late-blight management plan for Colorado, which includes disease scenarios, management techniques, workshops and grower meetings."

Zink has been instrumental in putting together laws for potato disposal, imports and exports. He's among researchers in the Valley who continuously search for additional controls for late blight, trying combinations of fungicides and new products on trial Crops. He works with producers in the other areas of the state, near Greeley and the Kansas border, who also struggle with the blight.

Smartt said he attends workshops, classes and meetings that Zink and other professionals hold regularly to keep farmer's updated about the blight. "The teamwork between Extension, consultants, chemical companies and farmers is apparent--and critical," said Smartt. "I wish there were more resources available to Extension, because they'd be available to us when we need them. I appreciate their knowledge, experience and dedication to our business and our success."

*Photo Cutline:* Phil Smartt (center), potato producer, along with every potato farmer in the San Luis Valley, had to make drastic adjustments in their production methods when symptoms of late blight showed up in the area two years ago. A team effort between Extension Agent Richard Zink (left), area consultants, chemical companies and producers was critical to the effort to slow the spread of the disease.

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### **Team Effort Musters Protection for Seniors**

Gardening. A summer home. Leisurely afternoons. Weekends with grandkids. That's how most people envision retirement.

But all too often a dishonest person robs the elderly of golden years of leisure. Elder fraud is one of the most prevalent crimes in the nation today. In fact, the Colorado Attorney General has declared war on it.

Denver District Attorney Bill Ritter has had a special program to prevent and prosecute elder fraud for several years.

According to Lisa Curtis, director of Consumer services for the Denver District Attorney's office, elder fraud makes up about 30 percent of all fraud cases that pass through their office.

That's disproportionately high considering only 17 percent of Denver's population is more than 60 years old.



Financial ruin characterizes these crimes. Curtis, who promotes crime prevention and Consumer education to the citizens of Denver--especially the elderly--said the amount of money taken by these swindlers varies annually. However, because of elder fraud, she noted that seniors' life savings are whittled away by more than \$50 million each year. And that's not counting the cost to these seniors' quality of life and dignity.

Extension's Consumer and family educators across the state have provided educational workshops and information for years in efforts to prevent Consumer fraud, and recently some of those Extension agents as members of the Extension Gerontology Team, have stepped up educational efforts to focus on scams and fraud targeted at the elderly. Extension along with longtime partner the American Association of Retired Persons, were part of a recent agency collaboration spearheaded by state Attorney General Ken Salazar to educate Colorado seniors about misleading sweepstakes. The "November Sweeps" campaign encouraged seniors to drop unopened sweepstakes mailings at banks, grocery stores, senior centers, Extension offices and other collection sites.

"Many senior citizens are afraid of the violence in their neighborhoods," Curtis said. "But the idea of being afraid of their telephone, their mail, their visitors, is not conceivable. They have a trust of someone who comes to their door or mails them an official-looking letter--there's an air of legitimacy to it. They think the government wouldn't allow such a thing if it weren't legal. We tell them that if they see a stranger at their door today, don't even open it."

Curtis explained that for a number of reasons, elder fraud is tough to fight. Many scam artists move around a lot. They base their scams out of the country, making it harder to trace their phone calls to victims. They have to be caught in the act to be prosecuted.

Worse yet, the perpetrator often is the victim's child, sister, niece, nephew, nurse. Perhaps the biggest obstacles are the very traits of the elderly that make them a target--their desire to please and be polite, feelings of overwhelming embarrassment at being a victim, a slipping mental capacity, difficulty saying no, an eagerness to trust. Those same traits make avoiding and reporting the crime especially difficult for them, she said.

She cited an incident of an elderly woman who got conned by a home-repair scam. "A man claimed that her roof was in bad shape and needed immediate repair. The first time the 'roofer' took money from her for 'repairs' he did, he got a sense that she may have dementia. He drove back to Denver from Arizona every month and demanded more money from her, telling her she'd never paid him. Her memory was slipping, so she'd write him another check each time. In all, he took her for \$42,000."

Elder fraud comes in all shapes and sizes--an adult child who skims his parents' bank accounts for "extra" care-expense money, telemarketers, utility or government employee imposters, sweepstakes contests, and the "travelers"--those pirates who pose as home-repair experts demanding money for unneeded, often imaginary, household repairs.

That's where Extension comes in on another collaborative effort called "Project Colorado." Extension agents and gerontology team members Gale Loeffler, Arapahoe County, and Barbara Martin-Worley, Denver County, worked with several agency partners to develop Project Colorado training materials to show financial institution employees how to spot and report elder fraud.

The Project zooms in on the one thing these swindlers have in common--a need to access their victim's money. By training financial institution employees--bank tellers, loan officers and others--to identify potential cases of fraud, these crimes can be prevented and the criminals can be caught.

A Colorado State University videotape is part of the training kit. "It reconstructs the true story of a woman who was taken for thousands of dollars by a home-repair scam," said Loeffler. "Two crooks were perusing Mildred's neighborhood when they saw her in her yard. They stopped, told her that the roof on her house was in bad shape and gave her an estimate to repair it. When she told them she didn't have that kind of money, they ignored her and crawled up on the roof to do the 'repairs' anyway. After spraying silver paint on the roof, they scared her and demanded money."

"An alert loan officer foiled the crime," said Martin-Worley. "The two scam artists drove Mildred to her bank to wait for her to withdraw the money they were demanding from her. Because she showed signs of being upset while she talked to the loan officer, he sent the bank guard out to the parking lot to talk to the 'travelers.'"

Mildred's case is a perfect example of the results that can come from training tellers and loan officers. Both suspects were convicted of felony theft by the Denver District Attorney's office. One is serving a prison sentence in Louisiana and the other is on probation in Texas and paying restitution.

Most of the elder fraud prevention efforts in Denver now focus on training people to spot and report it. Financial institutions are a critical part of our efforts to protect seniors," said Curtis. "Reaching this audience with educational messages about elder fraud can stop a crime and lessen the losses. Being successful in fighting elder fraud depends on working together with agencies like Extension and the banking industry to increase awareness and education about types of scams, how to spot them, and how to intervene once someone's suspicious. Our work is just starting," she said.

*Photo Cutline:* Lisa Curtis, director of Consumer services for the Denver District Attorney's office, is working on a program to prevent and prosecute elder fraud, which makes up about 30 percent of all fraud cases that pass through their office. She said a

successful fight against elder fraud depends on working together with agencies like Extension and the banking industry to increase awareness and education about types of scams.

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### **Thriving Under Cover**

One of our state's industries is thriving by going under cover. Colorado has the largest acreage of greenhouse-grown vegetables in the United States. And annual sales top \$170 million for all greenhouse-grown products in the state.

Steve Newman, Colorado State University Extension greenhouse Crops specialist, expects strong growth to continue. "Colorado's greenhouse industry still is very young and has great potential, especially in vegetable production," he said.



Newman keeps close track of greenhouse production. He regularly visits growers, responds to their requests for help, and also answers their questions by telephone and e-mail.

Colorado's greenhouse industry is composed of growers throughout the state, although about 70 percent of growers are located in Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Denver, Jefferson, Morgan and Weld counties. Other counties with significant greenhouse production include Douglas, El Paso, Fremont, Garfield, Larimer, Mesa and Pueblo.

While it's young, Colorado's greenhouse industry isn't totally new. As far back as the early 1900s, growers cultivated carnations in greenhouses. That flower-growing business thrived into the 1960s, when the source for most carnations shifted to South America. Colorado's flower-growing efforts now focus on roses and specialty plants such as poinsettias.

Newman noted that the most recent--and dramatic--impact on the state's greenhouse production has come in the form of vegetables--especially tomatoes. "They are changing the appearance of the greenhouse industry in Colorado," he said.

More than 100 acres of tomatoes are grown in Colorado greenhouses, which ranks the state first in the nation in this category. One company, Colorado Greenhouse Holdings LLC, accounts for about 90 percent of that production, Newman said. The company works with growers in Brush, Fort Lupton and Rifle, and also has operations in New Mexico and Baja California.

"Colorado Greenhouse produces up to 1 million pounds of tomatoes during their peak season and averages about 500,000 pounds per week year-round," Newman pointed out. "In addition, Colorado Greenhouse has made high-quality, hydroponic tomatoes a mainstream commodity in grocery store produce departments statewide, an accomplishment that also benefits Colorado's smaller greenhouse operations."

Newman pointed out that smaller growers compete successfully by providing fresh produce and high-quality service, selling through a variety of outlets including Farmer's

Markets, developing new markets such as upscale restaurants, and offering alternative Crops such as fresh-market herbs. Newman describes fresh herbs as "virtually an untapped market."

Mountain Valley Development Center in Glenwood Springs, Osage Farms in nearby Newcastle and Bellwether Farms in Fort Collins are three greenhouses that have taken the fresh-herbs plunge. Mountain Valley employs disabled individuals in a number of enterprises, including the production of a variety of greenhouse herbs. Osage Farms and Bellwether Farms specialize in growing fresh basil.

In addition to working with both large and small growers to help make them more successful, Newman answers questions from prospective growers looking for an alternative lifestyle or to take advantage of an opportunity offered by a relatively new and growing industry.

Newman cautions newcomers about the industry's demands. "A greenhouse can provide financial and emotional profits, so it's an attractive business. But it's also very challenging."

Theron Blazzard, owner of Blazzard Greenhouse in Lafayette, can attest to the rewards and challenges. He became interested in greenhouse Crops about 11 years ago, after he retired from the oil and gas business in Denver. Blazzard had grown a variety of Crops in a large Garden on his two-acre property, but he had no experience in greenhouse production.

Blazzard said he read everything he could about greenhouse production when he first got started and asked a lot of questions of the Extension office in Adams County. He then met Newman when the two of them served on the research committee of the Colorado Greenhouse Growers Association. Blazzard said the assistance he's gotten from Extension has been especially helpful to his success as a grower.

Newman's educational advice for growers focuses on how to cope with plant diseases, assistance with soil and water analysis and pest-control strategies, and updates on production technology. Blazzard and Newman both pointed out that a greenhouse's high humidity and temperature, combined with lush foliage, make it an ideal environment to grow Insects and diseases along with Crops.

"Keeping Insects and diseases under control is a constant challenge for growers," Blazzard said. "A greenhouse requires management every day. It's definitely a full-time, hard-work job."

Blazzard began his business as a part-time enterprise to grow tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers, then continued to expand his greenhouse until it became a year-round commitment. He usually grows about 2,500 tomato plants during periods of full production. "We try to harvest one pound per plant, per week," Blazzard said. He produces tomatoes about nine months out of the year and sells his produce under the Blazzard Greenhouse label through Alfalfa's Market and at farmer's markets in the Boulder area. He and his family plan to add lettuce to their production this year.

Newman said Extension continues to expand its services to help Colorado's greenhouse growers survive and thrive. In partnership with Colorado State's department of horticulture and landscape architecture and the Colorado Greenhouse Growers Association, they offer the annual Rocky Mountain Greenhouse shortcourse for professionals. Specialists provide a monthly on-line newsletter, "Mile High Growing" for area greenhouse growers, and they are developing a curriculum for training and certifying greenhouse employees, along with a web-based course in greenhouse management. Recently, Chris Freeman, Extension commercial greenhouse agent has joined the staff in Adams County. His academic training focused on greenhouse crop production and

management, especially related to hydroponically-grown vegetables.

*Photo Cutline:* Steve Newman, Colorado State University Extension greenhouse Crops specialist, provides current information and individualized support to Colorado's greenhouse growers. Research and technology transfer from the university through such events as the annual poinsettia open house, which showcases variety trials and on-going research, are important to Colorado's thriving greenhouse industry.

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### **Creative Partnerships Help Communities Thrive**

Urban sprawl, technological changes and a lack of profits can make farming and ranching seem almost impossible these days. And for the communities built on a foundation of agriculture, the urbanization of Colorado's farm land and economy leaves them with a sour taste and a threat to their livelihoods.



But Rosemary Biggins starts each day helping Colorado communities turn sour to sweet. As a marketing specialist with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Biggins believes in helping these communities face change. She believes in bringing more agricultural-based business into these Colorado communities, whether it's helping a farmer start a food processing business that eliminates the middleman and keeps more profits at home, finding a market for their own product, or bringing an agricultural-based manufacturer into a struggling rural area.

"Farmers and ranchers typically get a very low percentage of the food basket price," said Biggins. "Middlemen, such as distributors, make a higher profit. In order to help our agriculturists reap bigger benefits from their life's work, I help them think beyond what they normally do to help them get more value into their product."

A "value added" product means that the producer adds an improvement to a typical product in order to market it at a higher price. A vegetable grower might make salsa instead of selling only tomatoes and onions. A community might build a grain-processing plant to make oil or flour rather than just selling grain. A group of ranchers might create an all-natural beef label under which to market their meat.

"Agriculturists are doing what they know best and have been doing all of their lives," said Biggins. "Farming and ranching is certainly a full-time position. It requires lots of hours and money. Adding to that responsibility can be pretty overwhelming. The farmers and ranchers who are successful in incorporating value-added steps into their business are the ones who find a way to do so without adding more time to their duties or more expense to their operation. We try to find value-added opportunities that don't stretch their limits but help them become more marketable."

For many of these types of projects, Biggins finds herself as a partner with Colorado State University Extension's Center for Rural Assistance, which is instrumental in guiding Extension's priority plan of work--Engaging Communities in Economic Transition. Rod Sharp, chair of the plan of work team, and Sheila Knop, coordinator of the Center for Rural Assistance and plan of work team member, partner with agency representatives like Biggins, representatives from rural communities, citizen-leaders, and other Extension agents to enhance local community efforts. This support of locally-led partnerships



enhances the ability of Colorado's small communities and rural regions to encourage existing business retention and expansion, foster value-added home-grown and home-based businesses, incorporate promising, feasible strategies into local-regional economic diversification plans, and address local-regional challenges, among other things.

"It's so important to have a gathering of people at all levels of a community or business," said Biggins. "We need entrepreneurs, business leaders, Extension agents. It's all of those different perspectives and talents that make value-added opportunities possible and profitable."

One program that both Biggins and Knop cite as a successful team effort was "New Gates Through Old Fences." This four-state initiative brought community members, including youth, Native Americans organizations, producers, educators and others, together to help make rural communities and businesses more successful. Yearly symposiums were held that brought together community teams from Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah who had opportunities to share successes, ideas and challenges with each other, including new market opportunities, value-added opportunities and constraints, and ways to work together to monitor and evaluate efforts for continued improvements. Other multi-state initiatives resulted from these collaborative efforts and continue today, supporting local community development plans.

"Many people who need help know what they want to attain, but don't know how to get there," she added. "Part of what we do as a team is to bring knowledge and services to help them identify their needs, assets and resources. And we help them recognize their success."

*Photo Cutline:* Rosemary Biggins, marketing specialist with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, believes in helping Colorado communities face change. Locally-led partnerships are key: "It's so important to have a gathering of people at all levels of a community or business," she said. "We need entrepreneurs, business leaders, Extension agents...it's all those different perspectives and talents that make value-added opportunities possible and profitable."

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### **Tackling a Growing Pain**

They come in the night. They sneak into the backyard, the vegetable Garden, the back lot, the pasture, even through the pavement. And just when you thought you got rid of them, here they come again...those plants out of place.

All over Colorado there are groups organizing to take back their lawns, their meadows and pastures; there is a war on weeds.



Noxious weeds threaten many of the natural resources that Coloradans appreciate, value and depend on for their livelihoods. These non-native invasive plant species reduce the productivity of cropland, rangeland, pasture, and small acreages. They alter the composition and structure of native plant communities, crowd out native vegetation, destroy wildlife habitat, and dramatically damage Colorado's scenic areas, wetlands and open space. They become introduced deliberately as "Garden flowers," or accidentally when dried seed heads attach to vehicles, people or animals, sail on the wind or float down river currents. They spread "like weeds" and become established where there were none before. They conquer more than three million acres of land each year, and six square miles of public land every day. In the West, weeds infest about 5,000 acres per day.

In 1990, the Colorado Legislature declared war on noxious weeds--a legal term to denote plants that pose serious threats to agriculture and wildlife--through the Colorado Weed Management Act. It gave the Colorado Department of Agriculture authority to launch the state Noxious Weed Management Program, an all-out effort in cooperation with public and private organizations to halt and reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

Colorado State University Extension, as a partner in this preventive effort to reduce the spread of invasive species, provides educational information and helps establish local weed management areas through coordinated efforts among private landowners and public land managers. As Colorado continues to grow, an increasing amount of agricultural lands and open space are converted to subdivisions. This disturbance of land serves as a magnet for weed invasions and Extension agents across the state get thousands of questions and pleas for help from home Gardeners and small acreage owners in their quests to tame plants on the most hated list.

Extension agents in Teller and Park counties--a fast-growing, two-county area west and south of Denver--began an educational campaign to address the variety of problems facing new small acreage landowners. As part of the campaign, a series of local weed education programs was offered to area residents to provide information on noxious weeds, integrated weed management, and weed control techniques. These workshops met a need of a group of homeowners from Woodland West, a development of two- to five-acre parcels near Woodland Park.

Many of the homeowners were complaining about Canada thistle on their lots and were concerned about the weeds' effects on native plants and property values. Richard Carpenter, one of the area residents, contacted Billie Malchow, Extension agent in Teller County, to get some information on control techniques. She invited them to an upcoming weed workshop and eight of the subdivision residents attended.

"Then the weed effort started 'growing' on us," Carpenter said.

The landowners learned that an integrated weed management plan relies on a combination of biological, mechanical, cultural and chemical methods—including selective spraying, and that plans based on a combination of methods tend to be the most successful.

Carpenter and one of his neighbors, Tom Kerwin, did their research, read Extension fact sheets and asked the local Extension agents to come to their development to teach a weed awareness and management class to a number of other neighbors. This site visit resulted in identification of yellow toadflax as another problem weed, one that most homeowners believe is a harmless 'wildflower.' The two men along with a few others organized the landowners in an all-out campaign to tackle the weed invasion. Beginning in fall 1998 and throughout the 1999 growing season, they worked with the landowners who had the biggest weed challenges. They enlisted the help of Alan Swartz, Extension agent in Park County, who is a Certified Pesticide Applicator—a title that requires update training and certification every three years on herbicide use, safety practices and management techniques.

Their homeowners' association in collaboration with the Teller-Park Soil Conservation District, the Woodland West Water Users Association, and their water-meter reader, have mapped the location of serious weed infestations throughout the area as a basis for a comprehensive weed management plan. Extension in the two-county area supports these efforts and the Teller County Extension office provides an educational newsletter, with financial support from the Teller County Commissioners, on weed management and other small acreage challenges. In addition, money was allocated in the Teller County Road and Bridge Department budget this year for weed control.

Kerwin said he has been impressed by the cooperation between Extension and other agencies in the two counties as they collaborate to get control of this problem. Carpenter was pleased with the neighborhood cooperation and the networking required to work on an issue that requires everyone to do their part.

"Each county is supposed to have a weed management plan, but with limited resources some are struggling more with enforcement efforts than others, and it is the responsibility of landowners to provide weed control on their own land," said Billie.

"Our area is blessed with abundant natural resources that we often take for granted until something reminds us of the fragile nature of our environment," Kerwin said.

*Photo Cutline:* Richard Carpenter, D.J. Edwards and Tom Kerwin, landowners in the Woodland West subdivision in Teller County have initiated a local weed eradication effort with their neighbors to eliminate noxious weeds that have taken over parts of their properties. After two years of effort that included Extension education, mapping weed infestations, selective spraying and cooperative neighborhood weed management, much of the yellow toadflax and Canada thistle—as shown in this lot—are under control.

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### **Helping Build a "Stronger, Healthier Community"**

Bruce Bosley knows the value of mixing new techniques with proven, traditional approaches. This Colorado State University Extension agent's work is to help Morgan County residents tackle issues such as the impacts of growth and other quality-of-life concerns.



Bosley has served as director of the Extension office in Morgan County since 1991, and he's lived in eastern Colorado for the past 17 years. Before he was appointed to his current position, Bosley worked as a Extension agronomist in Sterling and as an agricultural consultant in Wray. As a member of the community where he works, Bosley--and his wife, Catherine--are currently active in helping to bring arts and musical events to the Brush and Fort Morgan communities.

Like many other counties in Colorado, Morgan County is growing and changing. Fort Morgan, the county's largest community with a population of about 15,000, has experienced annual growth of about three percent. Included in that growth is a steady increase in the Hispanic population, attracted to Fort Morgan by permanent jobs in heavy industry, the city's fresh-tomato greenhouse and production of other agricultural Crops.

Morgan County is growing slowly as compared with the accelerated pace of growth along the Front Range or in mountain counties. But as Bosley points out, "Change, even if it comes slowly, is inevitable."

He said he and his staff put a priority on helping Morgan County's communities adjust to change by emphasizing issue-based programming. That means focusing on the most significant issues that impact Morgan County. "We don't take sides, we don't have an agenda, and we take a long-term perspective," Bosley stressed. "Our role is to help initiate and facilitate discussion and to provide expertise from Extension and the university when it's needed."

Bosley explained that it's important to encourage discussion among Morgan County residents and leaders because individuals who have different interests can share common goals. That fact became apparent during round-table discussions that Bosley organized to bring together farmers, ranchers and environmentalists.

"Environmentalists as well as farmers and ranchers say they want to preserve open space. That's not surprising," Bosley said. "Farmers were among this country's first environmentalists. They have a rich history as stewards of water and land resources."

In another environmentally related effort, Bosley and his staff have established a program

to help Morgan County residents regularly evaluate the quality of their water supply. "Water quality is a priority for Extension throughout Colorado," Bosley pointed out. "It's an especially high-profile issue in eastern Colorado where our 'hard' water contains significant amounts of mineral salts and other elements."

While farmers and ranchers want to preserve a high quality of life in Morgan County, they also need to increase their incomes, Bosley said. This presents a definite challenge because like many areas in Colorado--and across the nation-- Morgan County's growth one day could reduce the importance of agriculture to its economy.

"Our issue-based approach doesn't necessarily focus on ways to totally preserve the county's current agricultural base," Bosley said. "Agriculture always will be important to this area, but the industry undoubtedly will have to adapt. I think it's accurate to compare agriculture to American industries that once were dominant but had to adapt to stay profitable, the steel industry, for example."

Bosley said one way that Morgan County farmers and ranchers are coping with change is by working with Extension specialists at Colorado State to evaluate the merits of new equipment, techniques that involve computer and satellite technology, and Crops they haven't grown before.

Another promising development in Bosley's estimation is the effort that community groups, Extension representatives, agricultural researchers and farm industries in Morgan County are putting forth to work together. He said by providing Extension education and training of community professionals and consultants on such topics as pest management and marketing, local agricultural producers have reliable, research-based information available.

Bosley gets especially enthusiastic when he talks about what he considers one of his office's most important long-term goals--broadening the appeal of 4-H programs to attract Hispanic youth. "We've organized after-school programs, and we expect to take our youth Like many other counties in Colorado, Morgan County is growing and changing. Fort Morgan, the county's largest community with a population of about 15,000, has experienced annual growth of about three percent. Included in that growth is a steady increase in the Hispanic population, attracted to Fort Morgan by permanent jobs in heavy industry, the city's fresh-tomato greenhouse and production of other agricultural Crops.

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Bosley said one way that Morgan County farmers and ranchers are coping with change is by working with Extension specialists at Colorado State to evaluate the merits of new equipment, techniques that involve computer and satellite technology, and Crops they haven't grown before.

Another promising development in Bosley's estimation is the effort that community groups, Extension representatives, agricultural researchers and farm industries in Morgan County are putting forth to work together. He said by providing Extension education and training of community professionals and consultants on such topics as pest management and marketing, local agricultural producers have reliable, research-based information available.

Bosley gets especially enthusiastic when he talks about what he considers one of his office's most important long-term goals--broadening the appeal of 4-H programs to attract Hispanic youth. "We've organized after-school programs, and we expect to take our youth programs out to housing complexes and the county's small communities," he said.

"Our office as a whole puts a priority on outreach efforts in youth development," he said. "We apply the latest research from family and youth-development studies to our county's youth programs. We also recognize that the traditional 4-H model can be extremely effective in helping modern youth," he emphasized. "It's actually the approach a lot of people are looking for today. It encourages family involvement, adult volunteers working with youth, and older kids helping younger ones."

Bosley said the Morgan County Extension staff's efforts include helping citizens broaden their perspective of what a community is. "Our Consumer and family efforts, our youth development programs and our ag and natural resource efforts work together toward our goal of helping build a stronger, healthier sense of community in everyone," he said.

"We look beyond individual needs," said Bosley about Extension's programs in Morgan County. "In light of today's headlines, it's critical for us to help develop strong communities that can meet current and future challenges."

*Photo Cutline:* Bruce Bosley, director of the Extension office in Morgan County, said his staff's efforts include helping citizens broaden their perspective of what a community is. "Our Consumer and family efforts, our youth development programs and our ag and natural resource efforts work together toward our goal of helping build a stronger, healthier sense of community in everyone."

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