

*Wilhelmina Jacobson, a clothing specialist with the extension service, discusses posture during one of the early Mothers and Leaders camps in southern Wyoming.*

# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION'S MISSION: More than 100 years and counting

*By Glen Whipple*

The University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) was developed at the turn of the 20th century largely to serve the educational and information needs of Wyoming citizens and communities.

This was a time when Wyoming lands were being homesteaded and farmed or ranched, decentralizing the management of the land from the very large ranches to smaller, family-sized units.

As I observed the turn of the 21st century, it appeared a similar decentralization of management was

underway with larger range holdings being broken into smaller ranches, farms, and homesites, underscoring the importance of UW CES's mission.

## **Responding to Needs**

Extending the university to respond to the needs of people living on the land makes as much sense now as it did 100 years ago. The common threads of extension's past and present are reliable, research-based information, a focus on management and stewardship of natural resources, an interest in the quality of the lives of the people, and constant innovation to meet emerging challenges.

The small acreage/rural living education effort is one example of UW CES's innovation to respond to the needs of the people and the natural resources of our state. Recent increases in rural or exurban living has put the management of the state's land resources in the hands of many more people, some who, like myself, don't have extensive experience managing rangeland resources. And rural living can have its challenges; wells, septic systems, windbreaks, and landscaping for wildlife or despite wildlife are all challenges I have faced. UW CES has much to offer ranchers, farmers, gardeners,

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homeowners – anyone who wants to better manage and enjoy more the land they steward.

### Resources Available

Extension has much to offer land managers, small or large: an office in each Wyoming county providing education in horticulture, forage management, range management, animal behavior, reproduction and nutrition, weed control, nutrition and food preservation, plant diseases, and control of insect pests; 4-H programs; the Master Gardener and Master Cattlemen programs; and the soil testing services are just a few of the resources available.

The strength of the Small Acreage Issue Team's educational effort as exemplified by *Barnyards & Backyards* magazine is in the team partnership. Working together with the agencies, organizations, and other groups that share our interests in Wyoming, its natural resources and in its people, has created a powerful educational service effort. It is truly a case where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. I am delighted at the benefits of the partnership for UW extension but more excited for the people and the education that is available.

Today's effort is not so different than our first ventures of extension. The first effort to take the research of the UW College of Agriculture and the nation's land-grant universities to the people of the state was a monthly bulletin titled *Ranchers Reminder*, first published in January 1904; it was a publication conceptually like



*Malcolm Moncrieffe, one of the first regular donors in 4-H club work, awards a registered Hampshire lamb to a 4-H member at Sheridan County Fair (1920).*

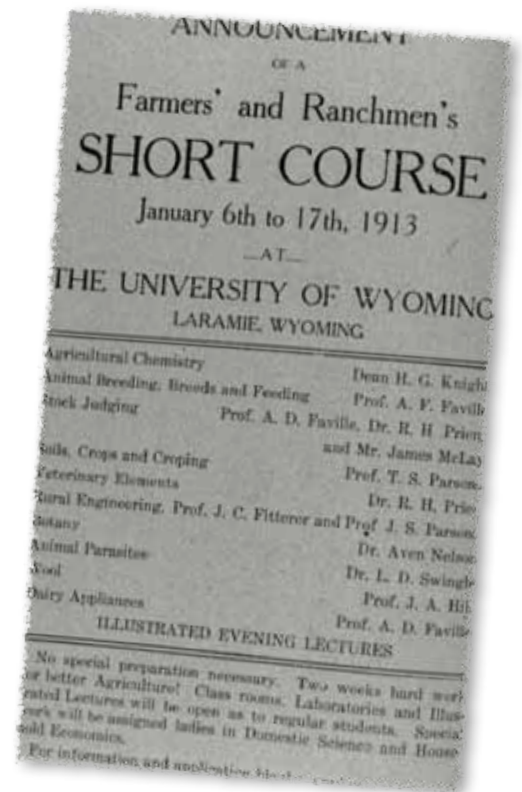
*Barnyards & Backyards*. By 1905, the college was sponsoring farmer and rancher workshops around the state, educational events not so different from small acreage/rural living workshops held across Wyoming by the Small Acreage Issue Team today.

### Engaging Wyoming's People

With the difficult travel of the times, early extension education was delivered by extension trains in which trainloads of experts would travel the rails of the state speaking and demonstrating at each stop. In 1940, one of the last of these extension trains was visited by more than 10,000 people at 26 stops around Wyoming. The first extension educator (called an "agent" back then) was hired in Fremont County in 1913. 4-H also got its start in Wyoming in 1913, and the home economics programs began in 1915.

Since our beginnings, we have been in the business of serving – bringing reliable, research-based information to help Wyoming people achieve their aspirations and solve their problems. *Barnyards & Backyards* and the other products of the Small Acreage Issue Team effort are the most recent extension response to the needs of Wyoming's people.

I hope you are enjoying *Barnyards & Backyards* magazine, taking in an occasional workshop, or calling your local extension office for assistance. If you want to know more about our programs, please explore our Web site at <http://ces.uwyo.edu/>.



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