

Extension Connection

In this issue

June 2006 • University of Wyoming

McKinstry era weaves
through extension
development in Wyoming 2

Wyoming 4-Hers leave
footprints on world 5

New CES bulletin, DVD
assisting ranchers,
agencies with range
monitoring 8

Leadership institute
graduates improving
northeast Wyoming 10

Research finds
rangelands can become
classrooms for livestock 12

Strong People – Strong
Bones expanding
across Wyoming 14

Uinta program elevates
after-school experiences 15

In late March, our own Stella McKinstry was honored by the University of Wyoming for her 60 years of service to the Cooperative Extension Service, the university, and the people of Wyoming. They gave her a gift, an honoring resolution, and a standing ovation. It was an awe-inspiring occasion for me. Hers has been a remarkable career – one that will not likely be duplicated in Wyoming or any other state's extension service. Stella might not appreciate my pointing this out, but it's amazing to think she has been an active educator for more than two-thirds of Wyoming CES's history. I am not sure what Stella would divulge as the secret to her success, but I see qualities in her I am trying to emulate. Stella has a remarkable ability to embrace and accommodate change and is one of the most positive and optimistic people I have met. The trustees' standing ovation honors not only Stella but all of UW cooperative extension. Her adaptability and optimism for the future mirrors that of Wyoming extension.

Highlighted in this issue of *Extension Connection* are some amazing program efforts aimed squarely at helping Wyoming's people. Have a look at the range monitoring story. It highlights extension's work to assist ranchers and agencies to reduce conflicts by developing joint voluntary range monitoring programs. Read the article on the grazing animal behavior programming (BEHAVE) – a totally different way to look at animal management and grazing. Educators in UW extension are getting ready to share this surprising program with ranchers in the state. The story on the Wyoming Black Hills Leadership Institute's first graduating class shows the effects leadership capacity can have on Wyoming's small communities.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Extension Connection*. Its stories highlight the adaptability of UW extension and our optimism for the future. We are learning, changing, and growing as Wyoming changes and grows. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Glen Whipple



Glen Whipple



McKinstry era weaves through

*By Steven Miller,
Senior Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology*

Weston County extension agent A.V. Hay was looking down the barrel of a shotgun leveled at him. Not a normal day at work for a county agent during the Depression.

Meanwhile, Verna J. Hitchcock, a home agent leader, recalled a workday that started with the clash of kettles and noise of a cream separator. Upon awakening, she realized she had to spend the night with a farm family because of bad weather following a home furnishings demonstration there last evening. Her day would eventually end at midnight.

Most of those early extension agents who braved long days, arduous conditions, and more than a little adversity from citizens, are now gone. One link that stretches back to – but not quite touches – those days is still with us. About a decade after

Hitchcock's experiences, she interviewed and hired Stella McKinstry, who began a career that marked 60 years April 16.

McKinstry is working part-time in the Sublette County CES office until a full-time person is hired. Whoever fills the position will look at a much different landscape in CES and rural life than when McKinstry started.

"It took a very special type of person to be able to work and go in among people who have very little or were set in their ways," says June Hanson of Laramie, who worked in the UW CES administration office from 1965 to 2001.

"You'll not find more independent, self-reliant folks than farm and ranch people who own their own place and do their own thing. I think people of extension in those days had a way with people," she says. "They could work with them without making them feel inferior or possibly being domineering, by being one of them and understanding how the rural folks felt

and lived. The extension agents were regarded as a main source the farm and ranch people could turn to for guidance and help knowing they would consider the situations of individuals."

McKinstry is one of those.

McKinstry has held only four jobs in her life – her CES position, one year of teaching in Colorado, working at a college men's boarding house as a college sophomore, and waiting tables in a dormitory as a freshman.

Colorado extension had almost landed her instead of Wyoming. "The reason I came to Wyoming instead of Colorado is that the starting salary here was \$2,100 and down there was \$1,800," she says. "That was a good wage. That \$300 made the difference."

She says she never was tempted to leave Wyoming CES.

"It is a satisfying job. I liked it all the time. You never work a day in your life if you enjoy it," she notes. "There is

enough challenge, variety, and independence. You are working with lots of different kinds of people with different interests, so there is a challenge any direction you go."

During her first year with CES – 1946 – she worked as an agent-at-large meeting with rural families in Albany, Niobrara, Fremont, Lincoln, Natrona, and Goshen counties. She was then appointed along with Del Landen as a county agent in Platte County in July 1947. She would later transfer to Sublette County in 1952 and remain there. The extension home demonstration program in the county was only 10 years old.

A single woman in her own car bouncing over country roads through the society of the 1940s, she would work in several counties a month.

"I was received fine by people," McKinstry says. "I think one of the things that was interesting is there weren't too many women who had cars at that point. People

extension development in Wyoming



Stella McKinstry, Sublette County nutrition and food safety extension educator, was presented a plaque by UW President Tom Buchanan for her 60-year employment with the UW Cooperative Extension Service. A letter was also read from President Bush and First Lady Laura Bush honoring her achievement.

couldn't figure out how a single woman could have a car and be independent. My first car cost \$600. It was a four-door Ford – a cute little car.”

She gave demonstrations on whatever was needed by rural families. “One of my first challenges as an agent was to teach folks how to reupholster furniture and give workshops,” she relates. “This was not one of the courses that was offered in college, so this program, as well as many others, was ‘learn on the job.’”

Extension provided programs people wanted, says McKinstry. “You had to have something people were interested in. When you found that, you developed a program and had meetings to train the leaders from the home extension club and they would go back and teach the club.”

Rural women were fortunate if they had an indoor water source, and most cooked on wood stoves or with fuel oil if available. Most ranches or farms had outdoor bathrooms. Many wives

worked alongside the family on the farm and ranch.

Extension and its programs allowed socializing to battle the isolation, and 4-H provided time for children to get together.

Television had not yet appeared. “People were very social-minded,” says McKinstry. “The home extension club was the social life of most women at the time – that and church. Almost everybody belonged to a club and was eager to learn. There was no

mass communications like now. We were the main educational process for everybody.

“I remember when TV first came out, we had been having Farm Bureau meetings on Thursday nights and they were well-attended, then *Wagon Train* came on TV and no one would attend meetings on Thursday nights.”

A satisfying element of her job has been feedback from 4-Hers. She recalls when a 4-H club, all boys, threw a birthday party for her. “They had the most beautifully decorated cake for me,” she says. “But when I started to cut it, I discovered it was a wood stump – everybody got a big kick out of it. Me, too.”

The list of office’s McKinstry has served is as long as one’s arm. Professional development was a goal of the Home Demonstration Agent’s Association. Agents were told to attend summer school. After that, McKinstry earned her master’s.



Stella McKinstry during a lighter moment at a recent UW CES 4-H program associate's retreat.

In addition to a car, McKinstry now had an advanced degree. "Women didn't have cars in those days," notes Mary Martin, Teton County CES educator and friend for all her own 32 years in CES. "Stella had a master's degree back when women didn't get master's degrees. Her whole life has been different from most women's."

Martin attributes her success to having McKinstry as a mentor. Martin was advised when she started to contact McKinstry if she had questions.

"It started off as a mentorship and has become a very good

friendship," says Martin. "When she leaves CES, it won't be a loss for me. Stella will still be in my life."

Martin describes her friend as intellectually curious, one who loves the outdoors, young at heart, and one who enjoys traveling and exploring. "She's a very ethical and discerning person. I've known her 32 years and don't believe I've ever heard her speak unkindly of anyone," says Martin. "That's not a trait you find among people much anymore."

There are many stories of McKinstry's sense of humor. Many years ago on one Homemakers Achievement Day,

"It is a satisfying job. I liked it all the time. You never work a day in your life if you enjoy it."

Stella McKinstry

and with all the ladies dressed in bathing suits and shorts, McKinstry was conducting a "day at the beach" fashion parade at the former Big Piney Community Hall. The Sublette County Cattlemen's Association was meeting about a block away, and McKinstry thought it a great idea to have the women model their beach wear across the Community Hall stage.

"It gave some of the Cattlemen a start to see their wives parade across the stage in bathing suits and shorts," relates a friend of McKinstry's.

There were dealings with difficult people, too. McKinstry remembers a workshop on broiler meals and cooking meat. One of the ladies insisted McKinstry teach them how to cook less tender meats in the broiler. "We had quite a discussion on only using moist meat for those cuts, but it was a challenging afternoon since she was 'always right,'" says McKinstry.

Glen Whipple, associate dean in the College of Agriculture and director of the CES,

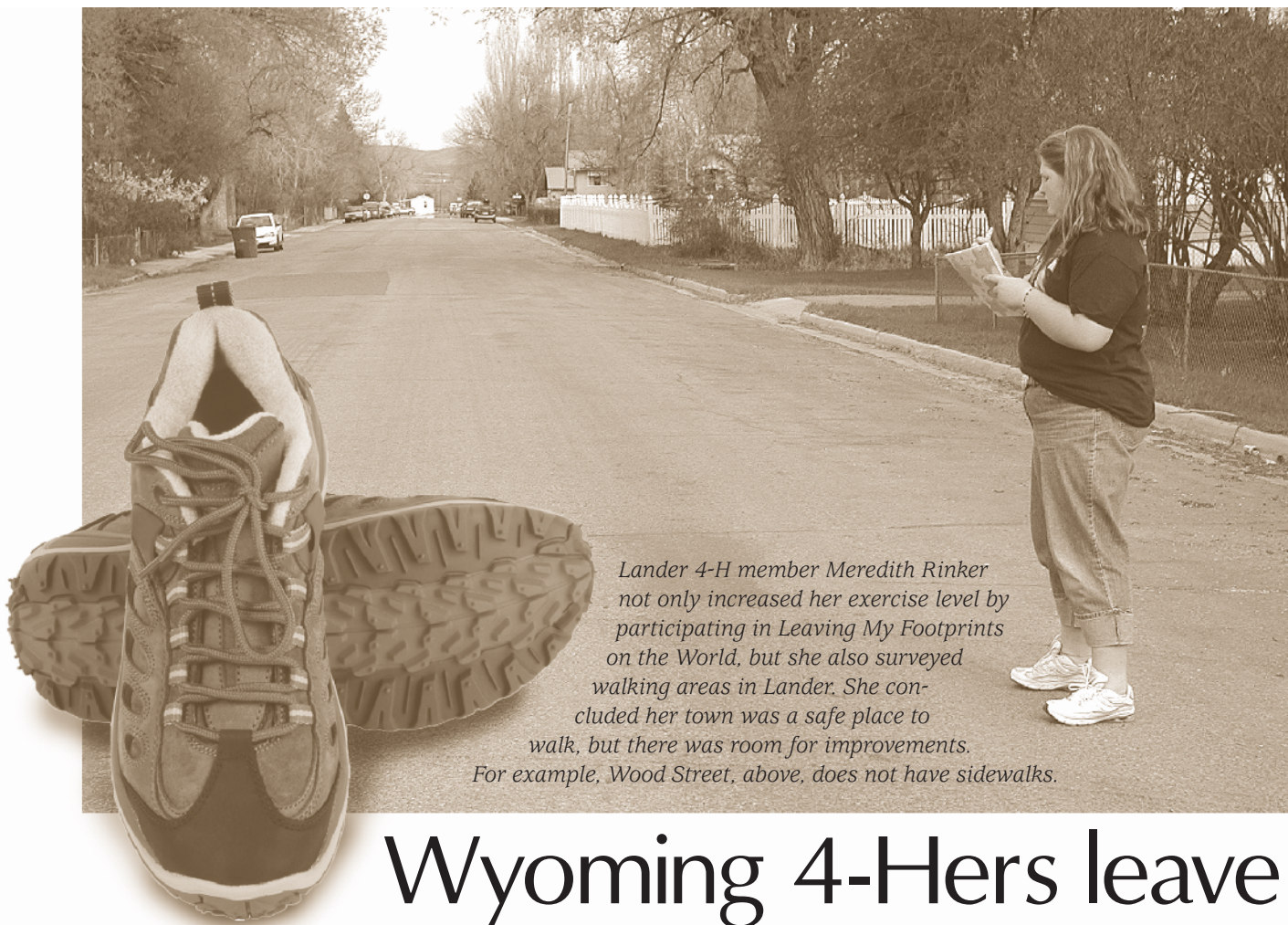
notes McKinstry has had an amazing career with UW CES.

He described her as a dedicated, life-long learner. "Her zest for life, attitude of service, and joy in learning are an inspiration to each of us in cooperative extension – an organization dedicated to life-long learning," he notes. "She will be greatly missed by cooperative extension and the people of Sublette County."

A.V. Hay considered that shotgun pointed at him. A rancher had come into Hay's office to get corn for his cattle. Hay tried to convince him to get cottonseed cake instead. After some discussion, which Hay did not elaborate upon, the rancher went to his wagon and returned with the aforementioned shotgun and leveled it at Hay.

"I want corn," the man said. He got the corn, but Hay, showing the initiative of the CES, was still able to get him to take some cottonseed cake. It was to become part of UW CES lore.

explore



Lander 4-H member Meredith Rinker not only increased her exercise level by participating in Leaving My Footprints on the World, but she also surveyed walking areas in Lander. She concluded her town was a safe place to walk, but there was room for improvements. For example, Wood Street, above, does not have sidewalks.

Wyoming 4-Hers leave footprints on world

By Robert Waggener,
Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology

Obesity is the most common health problem facing today's children, according to a national health and nutrition survey, and Colleen Campbell and colleagues in the University of Wyoming's Cooperative Extension Service launched a program to encourage more youths to walk.

Leaving My Footprints on the World is still in its infancy in Wyoming, but four coun-

ties and approximately 30 youths (including 4-H members) and adults have participated, says Campbell, a 4-H program associate in Natrona County.

"Even though the short-term data has produced some extremely good results, the challenge remains with these individuals to continue positive lifestyle changes over many years," Campbell says.

Five of the youths completed formal

documentation following an eight-week study.

"They declared war on sedentary lifestyles and agreed to formally log their steps for eight consecutive weeks," says Campbell, who notes the five participants reported a 54-percent average increase in the number of steps taken daily from the beginning to the end of the study.

One of the participants, Lander 4-H member Meredith Rinker, reported she became

healthier by exercising more and watching her diet. She increased her steps from 4,100 daily to an average of 6,979 over the eight-week period.

"She became so involved with the walking project that she incorporated a 'neighborhood walkability' study into her daily walking schedule," Campbell says. "She evaluated 13 different walking areas in Lander, and rated them on factors such as adequate places to walk, ease of



Light stretching before walking is always recommended, according to Natrona County 4-H Program Associate Colleen Campbell, who is leading the Leaving My Footprints on the World program. Among the participants are, sitting, Abigail Gray, and, standing from left, Lisa Andreen, Larissa Gray, Sarah Rodabaugh, and Carley Demple.

crossing streets, traffic problems, and safety. She concluded that her town was a safe place to walk, but there was room for improvements.”

Patti Griffith, Nutrition and Food Safety/4-H extension educator in Fremont County, says, “I was really impressed with Meredith’s project. For an 11-year-old, she really had some good insights.”

As an example, Griffith notes, “Meredith discovered that some areas of town don’t have sidewalks. Even though these are low-traffic residential areas, the addition of sidewalks would make

them safer. She learned that as it is now, people often walk down the side of the street.”

Rinker used a five-point checklist (www.walkinginfo.org) developed by the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center, Partnership for a Walkable America, U.S. Department of Transportation, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She answered the following questions: did you have room to walk, is it easy to cross the street, was traffic a problem, did you feel safe, and was it a pleasant place to walk.

Griffith says the 4-Her plans to continue the project this summer and then make recommendations to the Lander City Council.

“This project really increases your awareness about physical activity and also your communities,” Griffith says. “The whole point of this ‘walkability’ checklist is to look at things that might discourage people from walking. It’s a tool communities can use to make their areas more ‘walkable.’”

The Dubois school system has invited Griffith to teach the

Leaving My Footprints on the World program to approximately 12 elementary students who will attend summer school this year.

Griffith says she will be taking Rinker with her so she can talk about the “walkability” survey.

“Meredith will introduce the tool and see if we can get that group of students to not only become more involved in walking for physical exercise but to evaluate areas to walk in Dubois,” Griffith says.

Campbell says the objectives of *Leaving My Footprints on the World* are to identify the benefits of walking, learn to make walking a priority, as well as demonstrate skills for setting and tracking walking goals for the participants. A side goal was to encourage others to walk.

CES food and nutrition specialists, using the



4-H Program Associate Colleen Campbell



Natrona County 4-Her Missy Shaw checks the number of steps logged from her walk.

Steps to a New You program, collaborated with members of the state 4-H office to develop the self-determined 4-H project, *Leaving My Footprints on the World*.

Pedometers were made available through

state nutrition office funding, and they were distributed through the state 4-H office. Trainings were offered to 4-H leaders and members in Fremont, Natrona, and Niobrara counties.

Materials were also passed out to participants. Among the handouts was information from the Wyoming Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 2003, which states that 9 percent of Wyoming's middle school students were determined overweight, 13 percent were "at risk," and 31 percent watched three or more hours of television per school day.



Area Educator
Patti Griffith

The survey states that poor dietary habits, being overweight or obese, and physical inactivity contribute to chronic disease in adulthood.

Campbell says it's her goal to involve more 4-Hers and other youths in *Leaving My Footprints on the World*, keep in contact with the original participants who completed the entire project for follow-up, and reintroduce the project to those who started but did not finish.

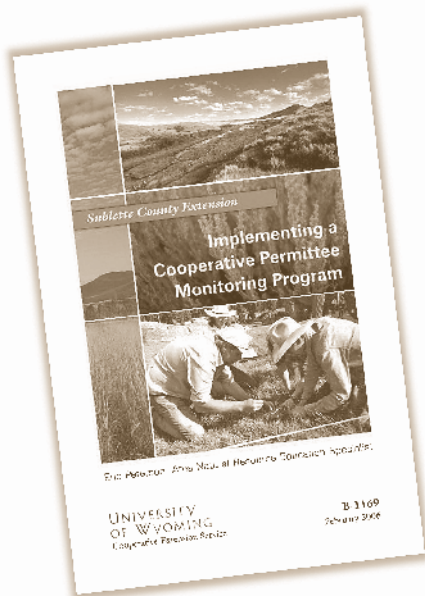
"We expect that future tracking will show the economic impact and the health benefits obtained. This approach may help to narrow the

strategies necessary to prevent or treat childhood obesity," Campbell says.

Five Natrona County youths reported a 54-percent average increase in the number of steps taken daily from the beginning to the end of the study.



Leaving My Footprints on the World participants, from left, Sarah Rodabaugh, Lisa Andreen, Larissa Gray, and Carley Demple calibrate their pedometers.



By Robert Waggener,
Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology

Requests are pouring in for a new bulletin and DVD produced by the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) to help grazing permit holders and managers of public lands implement cooperative rangeland monitoring programs.

The author, Eric Peterson, an area

extension educator for Sublette, Teton, and Lincoln counties, says 1,500 copies of the bulletin, *Implementing a Cooperative Permittee Monitoring Program*, and 600 DVDs have been distributed throughout the western United States.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Washington, D.C., requested copies for every BLM state and field office, and the Idaho Cattle Association asked for 75 copies.

Peterson is developing a mailing list to distribute the bulletin and DVD to extension range specialists, cattle-related organizations, state departments of agriculture, and U.S.

Forest Service (USFS) offices in the West.

The 26-page bulletin is available at <http://www.uwyo.edu/CES/PUBS/B1169.pdf>.

Copies of B-1169 and/or the DVD can also be ordered free of charge from: Eric Peterson, Sublette County Cooperative Extension Service, Box 579, Pinedale, WY 82941-0579.

The idea of producing the guide came to Peterson after becoming involved in several rangeland monitoring programs in western Wyoming. The first one started in 1996.

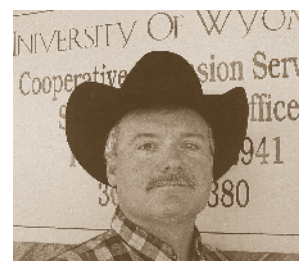
"It came about as a result of friction between the grazing permittees and Forest Service," Peterson says. "At the time, findings the agencies made concerning the level of grazing use were made without the involvement of the permittees. That caused some problems."

A federal report expressed concern about stream sedimentation and erosion, and blame was placed on livestock grazing, Peterson says.

"When the permittees saw the report, it upset them quite a

little because they didn't think the findings were accurate," he notes.

Peterson and other UW CES educators brought the two sides together in an effort to resolve the dispute. Both



Area Educator
Eric Peterson

sides voluntarily agreed to meet.

"We've gone from a situation of contentiousness and animosity to one where we have a great working relationship between the parties. They are tied together by this volunteer program. They are working together to enhance the stewardship of the public lands," Peterson says.

Follow-up studies determined the problems outlined in the initial report were based on issues beyond the control of the grazing permit holders, he notes.

More important, he adds, were the long-term volunteer monitoring programs that came



Filming takes place for the range monitoring DVD produced by Eric Peterson, an area extension educator for Sublette, Teton, and Lincoln counties. Being filmed are Joel Bousman, left, a grazing permittee who ranches near Boulder, and Steve Laster, a range specialist with the Bureau of Land Management.

ranchers, agencies with range monitoring

about because of the problems between the two sides. Since the first meetings, the effort has expanded to include several grazing associations and the USFS and BLM in western Wyoming. There is volunteer monitoring of 300,000-plus acres of public lands involving nearly 15,000 cattle and 3,800 sheep in Sublette County alone.

“With the assistance of CES, the grazing associations and agencies have gotten together to develop programs to monitor such things as cattle use and the trends in range and stream-bank conditions. After 10 years, they have developed objectives for the rangeland, and they have evaluated the grazing strategies. It has resulted in documented stewardship of the rangelands,” Peterson says.

Some might argue such a program leads to a situation of the fox (grazing permit holders) guarding the henhouse (in this case the federal lands).

“Range specialists are stretched way too thin to monitor all the public lands the way they wish. They have

other pressing demands in addition to range monitoring work. When a rancher volunteers to be a partner in managing the rangeland, the members of the partnership define objectives for that rangeland. Permittees receive training from their agency specialist and others on rangeland monitoring methods, which measure the completion of those objectives,” Peterson says.

When objectives aren’t being met, the parties can sit down to address the situation, Peterson continues.

Since the livelihoods of many ranchers in the West depend on public lands, he stresses, “I would argue the permit holders want to be good stewards of the rangelands, and the range specialists, in essence, now have volunteer range technicians working with them. This is a win-win situation for the agencies, the permittees, and the owners of the land – in this case the public.”

The bulletin states a number of things lead to a successful monitoring program including voluntary involvement by permit holders and managers of the public lands.



Mike Smith, a range management specialist in the Department of Renewable Resources, provides instruction on rangeland monitoring to grazing permittees, federal range specialists, and other Cooperative Extension Service specialists and educators during a monitoring ride in western Wyoming’s Bridger Wilderness.

“Both parties need to want success,” Peterson writes.

The bulletin stresses that a management plan should be kept simple, and it urges parties to use “KISS” as the basis of any monitoring program. KISS stands for “Keep It Simple, Silly!”

The parties should choose indicators that have a clear relationship to the objective.

“If you have an objective calling for less bare ground, then monitor for bare ground. Resist choosing a grand methodology that provides the frequency of a particular species of grass in your data collection!” the bulletin states.

Based on the success of the program, Peterson says, “We’re in the process of starting three new volunteering programs in Lincoln and Sublette counties.

“One of the important things is to establish a good working relationship between the permittees and agency range specialists. The relationship is important so they can come together in unison and develop objectives concerning a grazing allotment. In doing that as a team, the agency and range specialists understand the needs of the ranchers, and the ranchers understand the needs of the agency and range specialists.”

cooperation

Leadership institute graduates improving

By Robert Waggener,
Editor

Office of Communications
and Technology

Members of the Wyoming Black Hills Leadership Institute's first graduating class are developing a walking and biking path for the small northeast Wyoming community of Pine Haven, population 296. They have already secured a \$200,000 grant to help fund nearly a mile of path.

The group also developed a brochure of historical sites in Newcastle, and it designed and obtained funds for volleyball pits in the same small town.

The three projects were among those planned by 13 "students" from Newcastle, Hulett, Sundance, and Pine Haven who participated in the first Wyoming Black Hills Leadership Institute (WBHLI), a collaborative effort that in-

cluded the University of Wyoming's Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES).

The nine-month WBHLI, held in 2004 and 2005, was so successful a second one is already in the works for the residents of Crook and Weston counties. It will run from September 2006 through May 2007 and is again being coordinated by UW CES Northeast Area Educator Bill Taylor. Gene Gade, a fellow educator in the same area, is also on the planning committee.

"The biggest thing I saw with the first class was an increase in confidence. They began to realize they could make a difference in their communities," Taylor says. "They also gained a number of skills in specific areas including conflict resolution, communication, and meeting facilitation. They gained an awareness of how their communities and counties function."

Taylor says all of this helped WBHLI leaders fulfill the mission to train and develop present and



Area Educator Bill Taylor

future leaders for northeastern Wyoming.

Among those attending was student Madison Shoop of Newcastle. Her mother, Carma, says, "The most long lasting benefit to Madison attending the leadership institute has been confidence and desire to be successful and take risks. I believe her success in college is in part a reflection of her positive experience with the institute."

Another participant, Deb Hougham, a customer service representative with Powder River Energy Corp. in Sundance, says, "Since graduating from WBHLI, I have been given more leadership opportuni-



Northeast Area Educator Bill Taylor, lower left, coordinated the first Wyoming Black Hills Leadership Institute, held over a nine-month period in 2004 and 2005 in Crook and Weston counties. He's also taking the lead for the second institute, which begins in September. Helping to teach a session last year were, from left, Linda Melcher, former director of the Cooperative Extension Service's Cent\$ible Nutrition Program, current CNP Director Mary Kay Wardlaw, and former Campbell County CES Educator Daun Martin.

northeast Wyoming

ties at work, like being asked to give training presentations to groups of employees. Another great benefit is I have learned how to access various resources for information, assistance, and funding for all sorts of community improvements and economic development.”

WBHLI graduate Robert Sieveke, a member of Pine Haven’s town planning commission, says participants were divided into small groups at the end of the first day and were asked to identify a project that could be completed by graduation nine months later.

“After considerable discussion, we chose to develop a walking/bike path in Pine Haven,” Sieveke says. “As a direct result of the WBHLI course, the project went through the planning stages and became a reality,” says Sieveke, who notes a federal grant of nearly \$200,000 was recently awarded to provide funding for nearly one mile of the path. “This will be phase one of a community master plan for this pathway, which will continue into the future.”

Another group designed and secured donations to develop two



Wyoming Black Hills Leadership Institute students broke into groups to plan projects in their communities. Among them were Mick Bohn, left, a pastor in Newcastle, and Madison Shoop, center, a college student from Newcastle.

sand volleyball pits at Newcastle’s community recreation area, and a third developed a brochure of historical sites in downtown Newcastle for use by locals, tourists, and others. Copies were given to the local chamber of commerce, museum, and other interested groups for distribution.

Objectives of the first institute were to provide training in leadership concepts and techniques; provide an understanding of the area’s issues, industries, organizations, and agencies; prepare participants for greater community involvement; and build relations between residents and their communities.

The second institute is being built on those objectives, but there will be a major addition.

“The associates (students) will spend a day in simulated situations under the watchful eye of trained observers,” Taylor says. “They will be asked to give impromptu speeches and will oversee committee situations. They will be put in an interview situation to resolve a conflict as a team.”

In addition to UW CES, others involved in the planning and steering of the first institute were the Wyoming Business Council, Newcastle Area Chamber of Commerce, Black Hills Power, Weston County Sheriff’s Department, Newcastle and Sundance community education, Pinnacle Bank, Newcastle Foursquare Church, Newcastle Workforce Center, and Northeast Wyoming Economic Development Coalition.



Participants in the first Black Hills Leadership Institute, along with facilitators and others, discuss issues relating to people who live on fixed incomes or in poverty.



Research finds rangelands

*By Steven L. Miller,
Senior Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology*

University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service educators might say an unusual approach to the relationship of livestock to rangelands is just plain, common sense.

It's formally called Behavioral Education for Human, Animal, Vegetation, and Ecosystem Management (BEHAVE). Its guru is Professor Fred Provenza of Utah State University's Department of Forest, Range, and Wildlife Sciences in the College of Natural Resources.

CES educators attended an April "train-the-trainer" workshop in Saratoga to learn more about BEHAVE.

A multi-state BEHAVE consortium received major federal funding to expand research and put previous research into usable

form. The consortium is now disseminating information. "The emphasis is on learning and behavior, but it's all tied together with classic animal and range science information," says Gene Gade, CES educator in Crook, Weston, and Campbell counties.

"Wyoming is on the margin of the BEHAVE project. I've been with the advisory board for several projects and am the liaison for UW as a whole and especially extension."

Animal science researchers the last 50 to 75 years have developed enormous knowledge of the nutritional requirements of domestic livestock, he says. But once an animal is put in a real-world situation, such as a botanically diverse rangeland pasture, many additional variables come into play.

Livestock must learn how to get enough nutrients but avoid toxins. They then pass that on to their peers and offspring. "That's where BEHAVE is

relevant – it gives insight into how animals learn and change behavior," notes Gade, "but it also gets into how managers can manipulate that."

Assuming a cow is a cow is just not true, says Hudson Hill, CES educator in Lincoln, Sublette, and Teton counties, and also a BEHAVE believer.

"I'd like our people to see some of the hands-on stuff they are doing," says Hill.

For example, sheep are taught to drink grape Kool-Aid instead of orange Kool-Aid. That may seem a trivial example, but the idea that animals can learn behavior not normally associated with

them has interesting ramifications.

"So much goes into what a cow eats and what they eat in different parts of the country," Hill says. "You can buy a horse from Texas that will eat thistle. That was learned in Texas. It goes back to the beginning. Young animals eat what their mothers eat, and their mothers eat what they eat for several reasons: learning from their mothers and peers and feedback from their own trial-and-error experiences in a natural environment."

It is a new way of thinking, says Hill. "Animals are creatures of habit, and the problem we get into as humans is we think that can't be changed," he notes. "There are some really interesting implications into this thinking."

Ranchers may not conduct class for their cows in pastures, but learning is still going on by the "students."

"Obviously, genetics are important, but there is also learning that begins perhaps



Area Educator Hudson Hill

can become classrooms for livestock

before animals are born and proceeds very quickly after birth,” says Gade. “We used to think animals were just instinctive. That’s not the case. They learn a great deal. They mostly start out by learning from their mothers and later from their peers and their own trial-and-error experiences.”

Animals are also tools producers use to accomplish landscape objectives. A rancher near Lander wanted to avoid riparian damage and trained the animals to graze on hillsides rather than at the bottoms. The ranch now can run more cattle.

“Are they able to train in a week?” asks Hill. “No, it took years and a lot of saddle hours and selecting of cows. But they doubled the number of cows on their ranch. There are huge implications financially. They can run more cattle on better pasture and are bringing back bigger calves with an implication on weed control.”

Through proper training and the main-



Area Educator Gene Gade

taining of good overall health, cattle can be trained to also eat undesirable plants, thus pressuring the undesirable plant populations and relieving pressure on desirable plants.

“There are examples where cattle have been taught to consume and not be bothered by noxious weeds that we always assumed they wouldn’t eat or that were terribly toxic,” says Gade. “There is research in Montana in which they took young animals exposed to eating weeds before and fed them Canada thistle, leafy spurge, spotted knapweed – a number of unpalatable plants we normally assume cattle

will not eat. When fed along with molasses and supplements in a pen situation in winter, the next spring they were able to phase onto the range where these plants grow wild and abundant. They ate a great deal of the weeds we formerly believed they would never eat.”

Spraying weeds is a Band-Aid approach, Hill says. “This is a holistic look at how plants and animals interact and how to utilize that to meet objectives. It’s an Eastern way of thinking rather than Western thinking. How do we manage the whole to attain our objectives?”

The behavior of some producers exposed to new ways of doing things is the same one can get from animals exposed to new situations, notes Gade. “You get some willing to try new things and others who are skeptical. If something has worked in the past and is continuing to work, there is not much incentive to change. You do find those who recognize the possibilities and

need for change and are willing to try. If he or she is successful, they are a credible model for others. Change takes time, whether for animals or people.”

Helping the bottom line is one benefit, but some also find the principles intriguing. “You find a lot more producers down on their hands and knees looking at their range much more closely and as a result become better managers,” says Gade. “Once they get to doing this stuff, they get fascinated with it.”





Southeast Area Extension Educator Christine Pasley leads a Strong People – Strong Bones class in the senior center in Wheatland.

*By Robert Waggener, Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology*

The success of Strong People – Strong Bones in Platte County has encouraged Cooperative Extension Service nutrition and food safety educators to expand the program in Wyoming.

The goal is to encourage middle- and senior-aged women and men to take charge of their own overall health, especially in the area of osteoporosis prevention.

“This program strengthens muscles and ultimately stimulates bone formation, and it encourages flexibility and balance. If you build a little bone each year as opposed to losing it, you greatly reduce your risk of getting osteoporosis,” says Southeast Area CES Educator Christine Pasley, who organized Strong People – Strong Bones in Platte County.

“Studies show that 80 percent of people with osteoporosis are women, and 20 percent are men,”

Strong People – Strong Bones expanding across Wyoming

Pasley says. “We joke that the program is for women and a few good men.”

Participants in the one-hour, twice-a-week classes start by warming up, then go through muscle and bone building routines followed by stretching and balancing, and end with a cool-down routine. Pasley regularly brings in additional nutrition and health information for participants.

Classes have been provided in Wheatland, Chugwater, and Guernsey, and so far approximately 40 residents have participated.

Pasley patterned her classes after the Strong Bones program started by Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts, in cooperation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. She attended a training session in late 2004 and then launched the program the following year.

“People have been very receptive, and they have promoted the program to friends,” says Pasley, who adds that local senior centers, healthcare providers, and community education coordinators

have provided support in a variety of ways, and several people have stepped forward to help lead classes. The volunteers receive training before they lead a class.



Area Educator Christine Pasley

“We are charging a minimal amount to maintain equipment and give value to the program, but scholarships are available for those who need them,” Pasley says.

Participants have offered positive feedback.

“All who filled out evaluations have reported increased strength,” Pasley says.

One Wheatland senior woman stated, “This is the fittest I’ve been since 1992, when I retired.” A younger

woman in the same class reported, “I can feel the new strength in my back, and my posture is so much better.”

Pasley became interested in starting the program when she read a report by the U.S. surgeon general that half of all Americans 50 and over will be at risk for fractures from osteoporosis and low bone mass by 2020 if no immediate action is taken.

The CES Nutrition and Food Safety Initiative Team selected Strong People – Strong Bones as a priority for the coming year.

“We’ll be bringing someone in for training this year. It will be a train the trainers. People in Lusk and Torrington have already expressed interest in starting programs, and this is in addition to the interest by our initiative team,” Pasley says. “We expect other communities will also step forward.”

Pasley recommends the following site and books: www.StrongWomen.com, and *Strong Women Stay Young* and *Strong Women, Strong Bones*, by Miriam E. Nelson, Ph.D., with Sarah Wernick, Ph.D.

Officer William Roe was a celebrity reader at Urie Elementary. The program offers after-school activities for students in Lyman and Evanston.



Uinta program elevates after-school experiences

*By Steven L. Miller,
Senior Editor
Office of Communications
and Technology*

Throwing four H's in with the three R's has proved beneficial to those who matter most – the students.

A 4-H program that took eight years to get off the ground has elevated after-school experiences for more than 100 youths in Uinta County. "It's exciting to see the outcome that came through teamwork and partnering," says Dawn Sanchez, University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service 4-H program associate in the county.

The program offers enrichment opportunities to Evanston and Lyman youth who might not otherwise have access to such programs after school.

Area care centers have waiting lists. "If you look at the statistics, after-school hours are the time for the most high-risk behaviors for middle school students," says Sanchez. "Some utilize tobacco, illegal drugs, and alcohol, and there are high numbers of shoplifting if you look at the statistics. Also, many kids are left unsupervised or engage in television instead of activities that can increase their decision-making or cognitive skills.

"There was a need to provide an avenue for those kids to be engaged in positive activities."

Work to implement a program started eight years ago with the after-school project beginning in January last year at Lyman and Urie elementary schools, both in Lyman. There were

only seven students but, by the end of last year, there were 75 contacts a week. In March 2005, Davis Middle School in Evanston was added, then Uinta Meadows Elementary School.

With the assistance of the Wyoming 4-H Foundation, a Daniels Fund grant was secured, which initiated the project. The Bridger Valley program was coordinated by Volunteers In Service

To America (VISTA). The Evanston-based program has been funded by 21st Century Community Learning Center grants through the No Child Left Behind Act.

Michal Reeves, Bridger Valley after-school coordinator, is a believer in the program. "I think it has a huge impact on kids," the Lyman native says. Reeves had been attending a CES CentSible Nutrition Program class when asked if she would be interested in becoming involved in the after-school program.

She finds volunteers, coordinates all activities, and enrolls students.

"We do many activities outside, and we had seen many kids outside just wandering around after school," she says. "A lot of those wandering



Area Educator Dawn Sanchez



Students in the Uinta County 4-H After School program at Lyman Elementary make Halloween cards with volunteer Wendy Baird.

kids have joined the program and are safe. It's also a great way for them to meet other kids."

Having the school system as a partner was a key to creating the program. Sanchez says the school districts were surprised by the educational efforts of 4-H. "I think in many minds 4-H is the traditional 'kids join a club, start a project, go to county fair,'" says Sanchez. "For those who haven't worked closely with

us, it was a real shocker for the school systems that we are engaged in these types of programs. They understand that now, but it's an educational process. The beauty of 4-H is that it can offer after-school programs and provide opportunities other programs can't."

For example, 4-H has a volunteer base already screened and trained. Many of the after-school volunteers are new to 4-H and not engaged in traditional 4-H programs, says Sanchez.

There has been 100 percent support from the schools, and Sanchez says the program could not be possible if not for the schools, communities, and youth groups working together.

"Hopefully, we are assisting with the whole educational process," she notes. "We offer additional help with core projects like math, science, and reading. The 9-year-old doesn't realize he or she is getting additional help with those core

subjects in the activities."

The children receive self-recognition, motivation, acceptance – all key to the social aspect of why they are there, she says.

"That 9-year-old is getting additional assistance in a creative manner and is in a positive, rewarding environment that provides them with the opportunity to interact with peers and build self-esteem skills," she notes.

Mentoring programs connect middle school and high school students with elementary students, as well as fifth graders with third graders.

"The kids you work with feel honored you would think they can help the younger kids," says Reeves. "It helps them develop self-esteem and, when you think they can do something, they are most likely to do it as well. The third graders learn not to be afraid of the fifth graders. Also, when they see that fifth grader and they know that fifth grader and will say hi to them, that's important."

Reeves says working with the young people is rewarding in itself. "They have such a different perspective on everything. They don't have worries like adults. When they are there, they are there to have fun. They are going to have fun no matter what you do."

Extension Connection

June 2006

Senior Editor

Steven L. Miller

Editor

Robert Waggener

Layout and Design

Tana Stith

Send comments or suggestions to:

Glen Whipple

Dept. 3354

1000 E. University Ave.

Laramie, WY 82071

(307) 766-5124

glen@uwyo.edu

UNIVERSITY
OF WYOMING



Printed on recycled paper

*The University of Wyoming
is an equal opportunity/
affirmative action institution.*

University of Wyoming
Cooperative Extension Service
Dept. 3354
1000 E. University Ave.
Laramie, WY 82071

PRESORT STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
LARAMIE, WY 82072
PERMIT No. 1