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Focus On Families

A Statement
of Direction and Priorities for
Minnesota Extension Service

Home Economics



Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota

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Extension Home Economics is building family strength through education

Helping your family learn to be self-sufficient in a changing world

Providing a “family expert” in your local community

Extending the research of the University of Minnesota to you and
your neighbors



A Message from Shirley Baugher

◆ Last year, Extension Home Economics reached out to 190,000 people in Minnesota.

Perhaps you, or a friend, were one of those people. If so, you know that our goal is to help families to be self-sufficient in a changing world. We are your "family expert," available when you need us.

As part of the Minnesota Extension Service, we extend the research of the University of Minnesota to the citizens of the state. Families face a glut of information; we help you evaluate and use information to solve problems.

A Changing World for Families

Families now come in many forms, and the variety is increasing. Divorce is at record levels. Fifty percent of women are in the work force. Couples are marrying later and waiting longer to have children, or having none at all. The nuclear family makes up only 10 percent of the population.

Technology links us to ever-expanding information sources. Of the knowledge we will have in the year 2030, over 95 percent will have been learned since 1980.

Economic pressures are affecting farm families and Iron Range families. Two incomes are often needed to meet rising costs of housing. Women still earn significantly less than men.

How will we meet the needs of families in the changing world of the 1990's?

Self-Sufficiency for Families

Our theme is one of prevention for families: helping them make decisions; teaching them to be self-sufficient. Within this overall goal, we will:

- Work in concert with the strategic plan of the Minnesota Extension Service by contributing to the central issues identified as state priorities. These issues are economic development, human development, natural resources management, and community leadership. They are described on page 2.
- Be on top of emerging issues. We will be more flexible, respond quickly, and be willing to change in the future.
- Provide in-depth programs through the use of specialized agents and the total resources of the University.
- Reach out to a wider audience of families through specialized programs and modern technology.
- Strengthen ties with other family agencies to share resources and eliminate duplication.

An Expression of Excellence

Our standard has been excellence in family education. We are dedicated to maintaining that standard in a decade of accelerating change for families.

You can count on us.



Shirley L. Baugher
Assistant Director,
Minnesota Extension Service
Assistant Dean for Extension,
College of Home Economics

Minnesota Extension Service

There are four program areas within Minnesota Extension Service: Agriculture, Home Economics, Youth Development and 4-H, and Community and Natural Resources Development. The booklet **Focus on People** outlines the overall goals for all these areas. If you read the booklet, you know that Minnesota Extension Service has a new name and a new direction. Formerly called Agricultural Extension Service, the new name reflects a commitment not only to agriculture, but also to the families, youth, and communities of Minnesota.

Regardless of the name, the purpose is to educate people in a very practical way where they live and work. The new direction is to focus programs and priorities around current critical issues, rather than around location, subject matter, or organizational boundaries.

Things will be done because they **need** doing. There will be increased ability to respond quickly as issues emerge. Team efforts across program areas will produce practical, timely educational programs.

Minnesota Extension Service will continue to concentrate efforts on rural Minnesota. However, the new focus means that non-farm and urban people will also benefit. Extension cannot be "all things to all people." But it seeks to be **some** things to **most** people in Minnesota.

The focus will be on those issues of greatest concern to Minnesotans; on issues where Extension has competence and can make a significant contribution.

Central Issues of Extension

The Minnesota Extension Service defines its focus in terms of four central issues that affect the lives of state residents. Within each issue, Extension deals with immediate concerns of people in their day-to-day living. It also strives to develop people's leadership abilities and to shape public policy.

Each program area within Extension, including Home Economics, will focus its resources on these central issues:

I. Economic Development

Programs will focus on the improvement of the agricultural system, and on other related areas of economic development: forestry, recreation, rural businesses, tourism, and energy production.

II. Environment and Natural Resources

The issue is balancing natural resource management and economic activity with conservation, productivity, and environmental concerns.

III. Human Development

A rapidly changing social and economic structure calls for programs addressing the needs of people: career and life changes, family resources, communication, housing and energy use, nutrition and health, safety, and vital needs of youth.

IV. Community Leadership

In the complex society of tomorrow, there is an increasing need for programs to develop community leadership: participation in government, public decision making, emerging leadership, rural restructuring, and youth as a resource.

Mission of Home Economics

Extension Home Economics is one of four program areas within Minnesota Extension Service. As such, we are a provider of educational programs throughout the state of Minnesota.

Our programs are developed and delivered with an understanding of the interdependence between individuals, families, and communities. They are based on the research of the University of Minnesota.

We seek to provide the knowledge and skills to enable people to be self-sufficient in a changing world.





Minnesota Families

◆ The family is an important and prominent group in Minnesota today. There are just over one million family households in the state.

Minnesota families have high educational expectations and health standards for their members. These factors, combined with our state's natural beauty and high quality of life, make Minnesota a popular place to raise families.

The family is remarkably resilient. However, the changing economic and social climate is placing new stress on families. By closely watching these changes, we can provide programs which enable families to adapt and thrive in the next decade.

Today's Families

■ Half of Minnesota's population lives in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. About 8% live on farms.

■ The median age is 29. The most rapidly growing group is people over 65.

■ The size of families has decreased and the divorce rate has reached record levels. The average is now two children per family. One in five families is headed by a single parent.

■ Middle-aged people are becoming the dominant group of workers. They find fewer opportunities for advancement and earn lower real wages than their parents.

■ Since 1950, the median cost of housing has increased sevenfold, while the overall cost of living has increased only fourfold. It is often necessary to have two incomes to meet housing costs. Employment of women, including mothers, continues to increase.

■ Reports of child abuse and battering of women continue to increase.

■ Over half of all adults volunteer time, many to organizations serving families.

Family Issues in the Future

Some of the critical issues of the next decade are:

■ Needs of the growing population of people over 65

■ Relationships between adults and their aging parents

■ Greater family complexity following divorce and remarriage

■ Violence within families

■ Restructuring family roles when both parents work

■ Increased options for women

■ Housing alternatives for lower income families

■ Health maintenance; wellness

■ Economic stability for families

■ Nurturing volunteer leadership

Who We Serve Now

A recent survey shows that Extension Home Economics currently reaches primarily married women who are middle-aged or older. About 40% are full-time homemakers and 16% work full time outside their homes. Many of them are members of home study groups.

Who We Will Serve in the Future

We will continue to pay attention to the needs of the group we currently serve: married women. We are also expanding our programs to include:

- Young families
- Low income families
- Single parent families
- Immigrant families
- Working women
- Young adults, male and female
- Husbands and fathers



Goals

◆ Our major goals for Extension Home Economics during the next ten years are:

1. Develop programs addressing the critical issues facing Minnesota families and communities. These programs will have added depth and quality as we use the total resources of the University, particularly its research base.
2. Serve as the "family expert" in our communities.

3. Reach out to a wider audience of families.

4. Give leadership to communities in planning for a changing economy and diverse family forms.

5. Develop strong links to other agencies and industries providing education and services to families.

Strategies

◆ Our major strategies for achieving the goals are:

1. Monitor the on-going needs of Minnesota families and communities in order to identify critical issues.

2. Use all available University research and faculty in developing programs to address the critical issues. Encourage faculty to specialize in order to provide depth in programming. Promote research in areas where it is needed.

3. Work within communities to become the recognized expert on the emotional, social, physical, environmental, and economic needs of families.

4. Serve new groups of families by developing programs to meet their particular needs. Use technology to make programs more accessible, such as video cassettes, home computers, and cable TV.

5. Work closely with community leaders to plan for changes in family forms and the economic climate. Provide resources to support communities.

6. Strengthen contacts with other agencies and industries that serve families: eliminate duplication, provide training to them, share successful programs with them.

Program Priorities

 The programs which have high priority for Extension Home Economics speak to the immediate needs of families in their day-to-day living. All fit within the four central issues described earlier.

I. Economic Development

■ Family Financial Well-Being

Develop goal setting and problem solving skills through recordkeeping, risk management, financial management, estate planning, and asset management.

■ Living in a Changing Economic Environment

Train volunteer consultants to work with families in economic transition.

■ **Economic Concerns of Nutrition and Health** Teach low/moderate income families to use food and health care dollars wisely.

II. Environment

■ **Shelter Decisions** Assist the 500,000 Minnesota families who annually move to new housing or remodel their existing homes.

■ **Cold Climate Housing** Find answers to moisture damage and air contamination in homes built or remodeled for maximum energy efficiency.

III. Human Development

■ **Balancing Work and Family Roles** Help employed parents balance work and family responsibilities.

■ **Healthy Lifestyle Education** Teach food selection and food handling skills which promote wellness.

■ **Obesity and Eating Disorders** Provide training for community professionals on bulimia, anorexia, and effective weight control programs.

■ **Evaluating Nutrition and Health Information** Help community professionals direct their patients to reliable health information.

■ **Efficient Use of Housing** Teach skills in purchasing, maintaining, and repairing home furnishings and energy conservation.

IV. Community Leadership

■ **Volunteer Management** Train Extension agents to assess the skills of volunteers and match them with appropriate opportunities.

Joint Programming Efforts

 Two of our priority areas cut across all the central issues: aging, and family-based businesses. Extension Home Economics will tap a variety of specializations to meet the needs of Minnesota families in these two areas.

Aging

With continuing growth of the over-65 age group, we will provide programs on many vital topics: financial planning to maintain independence; estate planning; health care costs; insurance options; preventive health practices; affordable housing; relationships with adult children; impact of an aging population on communities; tapping older adults as volunteers.

Family-based Businesses

Economic pressure is causing many families to consider starting a small family business. Our programs assist in determining feasibility of business ideas; arranging work space in the home; understanding state and federal regulations; pricing and marketing products; balancing family relationships with business demands.



Benefits

◆ How do the plans of Extension Home Economics benefit you as a family member? Or you as a taxpayer?

For You as a Taxpayer

- Families learn to be more self-sufficient, relying less on public support.
- Your investment in the University of Minnesota is extended to residents throughout the state.
- Agencies serving families save money by sharing successful programs and eliminating duplication.

For You as a Family Member

- You can receive information or learn skills to make your life happier and more satisfying. Help is available on a growing range of family issues: nutrition, health, financial management, aging, housing, relationships, family-based businesses, and more.
- You can rely on the information being accurate, unbiased, and up to date. It is based on the research of the University of Minnesota.
- The information is easy to get. It costs very little. It's available when you need it.

The Future

◆ The future issues for Minnesota families are familiar: health, environment, economic stability, varying family forms. Technology will enable us all, regardless of location, to have access to information as we need it. The challenge is to analyze and interpret the information in our particular situation.

Extension programs of the future will focus on the family system. They will emphasize the interdependence of physical, emotional, economic, and spiritual dimensions of family life.

The Extension home economist of the future will:

- Use technology to deliver programs.
- Be highly trained in specialized areas.
- Work as a team member within regional education centers.
- Use the entire resources of the University.
- Coordinate with other agencies and businesses serving families.

Minnesota Families in the Next Decade

Time: 1989

Location: A family farm

Money is tight on the Carlson farm. Production costs keep rising. Mortgage payments outstrip income. Family members are tense and unhappy, yet they do not talk about the problem.

Then, John and Lois Carlson watch a video cassette from the library on family farm problems and solutions. The program is produced by Extension Home Economics. The next day, John calls the home economist and arranges a visit from an Extension volunteer financial management consultant.

The consultant brings a portable computer. Together the family enters information about their finances. The resulting report identifies places to save on expenses, and the consultant leaves brochures with further information. A follow-up visit is scheduled in three months.

Lois and John are invited to a support group for farm families in transition. They learn that they are not alone, and share feelings and information. Money is still tight, but the family can focus on the choices they have and support each other.

Time: 1994

Location: St. Paul, MN

Today's first stop for the Extension nutrition specialist is a Hmong family home. Six refugee mothers gather for a lesson on calcium. In their culture, milk is given only to babies. Unfortunately, many Hmong adults have milk intolerance, so they learn about other sources of calcium to maintain strong bones.

Later, the specialist writes an article on the latest University research concerning diet and cancer. The article is sent out to county offices and community health agencies through a computer "bulletin board."

Next, the specialist prepares for an evening video teleconference with groups of single adults in several locations around the state. They tune in via satellite. The topic is preparing nutritious meals for one person. Group members are able to see a demonstration on television screens and ask questions of the specialist.

In one day, the nutrition specialist has directly reached nearly 100 people, and through her article, potentially helped hundreds more.

Time: 1998

Location: Willmar, MN

Anna and Juan Martinez, a dual-career couple in their 30's, are first-time parents. They explore ways to share child rearing and home chores with an interactive video program from Extension Home Economics. As common situations are described on the screen, they select possible solutions and the program displays the probable results. They have a chance to "try out" new behaviors.

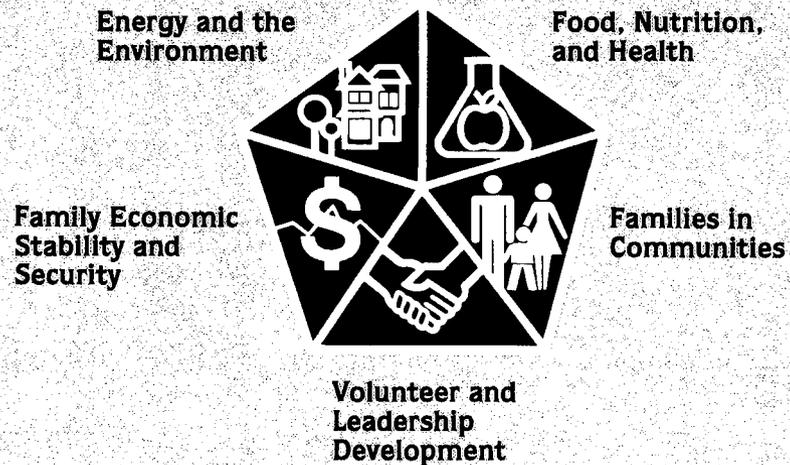
The home economist directs Anna and Juan to a child care referral agency. The licensed home they select is run by a woman who used Extension resources to start her family-based business. She now receives regular Extension updates on the latest research in early-childhood health and safety.

Anna's mother dies suddenly, leaving her father depressed and unable to care for himself. Anna feels caught between the needs of her father and her family. The home economist specializing in aging directs Anna to community agencies providing in-home health aides and senior activities. She also links Anna to an Extension volunteer, trained to provide support in this situation.

Information, referrals, and emotional support ease the transition of caring for a child and for one's aging parents.



Minnesota Extension Service Home Economics



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