

Extension Workers Creed

I believe in people and their hopes, their aspirations, and their faith; in their right to make their own plans and arrive at their own decisions; in their ability and power to enlarge their lives and plan for the happiness of those they love.

I believe that education, of which Extension is an essential part, is basic in stimulating individual initiative, self-determination, and leadership; that these are the keys to democracy and that people when given facts they understand, will act not only in their self interest, but also in the interest of society.

I believe that education is a lifelong process and the greatest university is the home; that my success as a teacher is proportional to those qualities of mind and spirit that give me welcome entrance to the homes of the families I serve.

I believe in intellectual freedom to search for and present the truth without bias and with courteous tolerance towards the views of others.

I believe that Extension is the link between the people and the ever-changing discoveries in the laboratories.

I believe in my own work and in the opportunity I have to make my life useful to humanity.

Because I believe these things, I am an Extension Professional

MSU Extension Today

Extension programs have adapted to the changes taking place in Otsego County over the past 90 years. The graphic below illustrates the major topics being addressed locally with the input and guidance of focus groups, key stakeholders, and the County Extension Advisory Council. Note that the people of Otsego County are the center of all activity. The smaller, concentric circles show how Extension programs are interwoven and are delivered in a synergistic approach.



Future of MSU Extension

One of the striking aspects of working for MSU Extension is realizing that this organization has been serving Michigan residents for more than 90 years. This history of Extension in Otsego County is a great testament to the adaptability of the Cooperative Extension model of engagement between a land grant university and communities. Cooperative Extension work begins with understanding the needs and opportunities facing people, communities and businesses in the local setting, and then consists of addressing those needs and opportunities through educational programs that are based on the most current scientific findings available. In this respect, MSU Extension in the future will not differ at all from the past that is documented so well in this book: MSU Extension staff assigned to work in Otsego County will continue to work on understanding the needs and opportunities across the county and then bring in educational programs to address those situations.

What will differ in the future will be the needs and opportunities people will face and the ways we go about addressing those needs and opportunities. For example, the wood resources of Otsego County may be tapped for new bio-based fuels and materials. Extension educators may need to provide education programming for wood harvesting and wood processing businesses that may develop in this new economic sector. Similarly, an aging population facing increasing health care costs may generate a need for new education programs in preventative medicine, health maintenance and development of new community resources to support seniors with more self-directed health management.

The way we deliver education programming will likely change as well, with information technology providing opportunities to deliver education programs through the internet at times and in ways that are user-driven. The partnerships we depend on to deliver education programs may change as well, involving new partners, such as community colleges or perhaps non-government organizations.

The mission statement for MSU Extension – MSU Extension helps people to improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities – will be as relevant in the future as it has been for the past 90 years. And we intend to ensure that MSUE can continue to serve this mission by keeping it connected to the local needs of Michigan’s families, communities and businesses.



Thomas G. Coon
Director, MSU Extension

Conclusions

Learning A Living condenses 90 years of Extension work in Otsego County into a few pages. It is intended to give a brief overview by highlighting a sampling of the wide array of Extension programs and services. In doing so, hopefully the reader will become more aware of Extension's educational role and its important contributions to improving the quality of life in Otsego County.

Extension brings our state's land grant university to the people of Otsego County through a three way partnership of the federal, state, and county governments. Extension's commitment to lifelong learning is what sets it apart from other government services.

Learning is an experiential process. The participant is actively involved in discovering the answer. That is the point of the Proverb featured in the center column of this page. Arthur Glidden stated it this way in the 1940 annual report:

“The most successful Extension programs are those which carry out conclusions made by local people. It is important to present facts leading to conclusions, rather than to present conclusions and expect them to be taken for granted.”

Tell me and I'll forget;

Show me and I may remember;

Involve me and I'll understand

-- Chinese Proverb

It should be evident that Extension programs have changed over time and are based on local conditions and priorities. Ray McMullen stated Extension's challenge in the 1957 annual report as “meeting the needs of the people in a fast changing world”. Those words are still true today. Not only do the types of questions, concerns, problems, and opportunities continue to change, so do the ways in which people want to receive information. Delivery of Extension programs have also had to keep pace with changing preferences and technology.

Looking back should also be useful in preparing for the future. Hopefully this brief history is recognized as more than interesting trivia and photos of the good old days. Just as Extension programs 50 years ago are different from those today, it should be expected that they will continue to adapt to new and exiting issues in the future.

Learning A Living provides a glimpse of Extension work in Otsego County that has helped people achieve safer, healthier, happier, fulfilled lives. This has been achieved – not by telling people what to do or doing it for them – but by Helping People Help Themselves.