2013

2012-2013 Piscataquis County Cooperative Extension Annual Report

Donna Coffin

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UMaine Cooperative Extension
Piscataquis County Annual Report
2012-2013

Helping Maine people improve their lives through an educational process that uses research-based knowledge focused on issues and needs.
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Harvest for Hunger

In Maine one in five children under the age of 16 live in homes where they’re not sure where their next meal is coming from. Forty three percent of people defined as food insecure do not qualify for food stamps or other government programs, and need help. Our Harvest for Hunger program provides high quality fruits and vegetables to hungry people in Maine. For the past 10 years, hundreds of volunteers in every County in Maine have grown food in community gardens, school gardens, home gardens, and commercial farms to donate to local food pantries, shelters, soup kitchens, and senior programs. Food recipients are encouraged to actively participate by learning from the program—they receive recipes, cooking, and gardening tips and learn about a healthy diet. This year school children, employees of businesses, community members, and Master Gardeners volunteered more than 830 hours to grow, glean and donate more than 209,000 pounds of quality food for those in need, and in an effort to stem the tide of need, helped the recipients learn about gardening, cooking and preserving.
Healthy Moose and the Maine Economy

The iconic Maine moose is an important element to the Maine economy, helping drive the tourism and hunting industries - wildlife watching and hunting in Maine are estimated to generate $1.8 billion annually. Since 2010, UMaine Extension has worked with the Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (IFW) to help diagnose the causes of premature death in Maine moose. Saving even 10 percent of the moose population by diagnosing and preventing internal parasites helps maintain the value of the tourism and hunting industry in Maine. Through necropsies our animal health lab discovered large numbers of lungworms, initiating a research project of lungworm morphology and associated DNA. We identified specific practices to help reduce the risk of lungworms and have worked with both the IFW and the Maine Center for Disease Control to help inform the public about health concerns when in close contact with wildlife.

e-Learning for 4-H Volunteers

4-H programs are of greater significance to children and the community than ever before. In Maine, as in other states, our most important role is to recruit, train, and coordinate the work of high quality youth and adult volunteers - there cannot be effective 4-H programs without well-trained volunteers. In 2010, we implemented a new web-based training program that makes it easier for volunteers to complete their initial training without compromising the quality of their experience. Once complete, volunteers engage in specific face-to-face trainings by our staff. In the past year, 700 volunteers have completed the eLearning series.

During 2012 over 29,000 youth were generously supported by more than 1,500 adult and 6,000 youth volunteers in Maine’s 4-H Youth Development Program through clubs, camps, schools, nutrition programs, and after school programs.
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Making a Difference

For more than 90 years, University of Maine Cooperative Extension has worked with Maine volunteers to offer community-driven, research-based educational programs in every county. Our annual report features highlights of recent accomplishments and the difference we make in the lives of Maine citizens and their communities.

Program Focus

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension helps support, sustain and grow the food-based economy across the entire state of Maine. It is the only entity in our state that touches every aspect of the Maine Food System, where policy, research, production, processing, commerce, nutrition and food security and safety are integral and UMaine interrelated. UMaine Extension also conducts the state’s most successful out-of-school youth education program through 4-H, empowering young people to reach their full potential.

The County Extension Act

The County Extension Act explains the role of county government in funding local Extension offices: Cooperative extension work shall consist of the giving of practical demonstrations in agriculture and natural resources, youth development, and home economics and community life and imparting information on those subjects through field demonstrations, publications and otherwise. For the purpose of carrying out this chapter, there may be created in each county or combination of two counties within the State an organization known as a “county extension association,” and its services available to all residents of a county. The county extension is viewed as a unique and important educational program of county government. The executive committee of each county extension association shall prepare an annual budget as requested, showing in detail its estimate of the amount of money to be expended under this chapter within the county of counties for the fiscal year. The executive committee shall submit to the board of county commissioners on a date requested by the county commissioners, and the county commissioners may, if they deem it justifiable, adopt an appropriate budget for the county extension program and levy a tax therefore. The amount thus raised by direct taxation within any county or combination of counties for the purposes of this chapter shall be used for the salaries of clerks, provision of office space, supplies, equipment, postage, telephone, a contribution toward the salaries of county educators and such other expenses as necessary to maintain an effective county extension program.
E-Outreach

Our priorities have always focused on meeting the needs of Maine’s people on the community level by providing education to a diverse and geographically dispersed clientele. Today, consumers are connected to the world through social media sites and the Internet, and have mobile devices where they can access resources anywhere they happen to be. New technologies have changed the way our programs are delivered and revolutionized our educational outreach. Over the last two years we have created over 150 short, educational videos in a series called Experts on Demand. Videos are shared across the University of Maine website, embedded in social media platforms, and showcased to important stakeholders.

In 2012 we prioritized a new technology-based position to provide organizational leadership and work directly with social media and video production.

Internet-based videos have exponentially increased the capacity for UMaine Extension to reach Maine consumers anywhere, anytime. Analytics show that our videos have been viewed nearly 800,000 times since 2010, with 49 percent of the views from Maine. Data allow us to know the most viewed topics, and consequently becomes an important element in understanding trends and interests over a much greater population, increasing our capacity to meet those trends.

Maine Animal Health Lab

Maine has a growing farm population, a commercial poultry industry, and too few livestock veterinarians. UMaine Extension’s Maine Animal Health Lab (UMAHL) offers diagnostic services to large- and small-scale producers in rural areas when there is no local veterinarian or when the local vet does not have relevant expertise.

We help poultry producers meet regulatory demands through testing, and diagnose animal health issues that may have profound negative economic consequences for an individual producer or an entire industry. Savings to the poultry industry in Maine is estimated at over $7 million per year through prevention of outbreaks as a result of the lab’s salmonella regulatory testing services.

Testing for mastitis in cattle has saved the dairy industry an estimated ten million dollars per year thanks to early detection and mitigation.

Sheep producers have avoided approximately $400,000 per year in costs associated with infectious preventable diseases such as parasites, foot rot, and caseous lymphadenitis.

Providing quick diagnostic intervention has helped producers maintain healthy livestock and stay in business.
Home Horticulture

Home Gardeners in Piscataquis County produce an estimated $1.3 million of vegetables and fruits to supplement their family food budgets. UMaine Extension offers classes, talks, demonstrations, workshops, newsletters, consultations, displays, Integrated Pest Management and identification to anyone growing foods or flowers.

Master Gardener Volunteers are supporting school and community gardens, caring for public spaces, growing food for food pantries, and offering educational talks and demonstrations. Training for new Master Gardeners will be offered this fall. The training features food crops (vegetables, small fruits and tree fruits) along with information on soil fertility, soil amendments, pest identification and management. Pests include disease, weeds and wildlife. For more information about the Master Gardener Program, visit http://bit.ly.piscmg2013.

Maine Harvest for Hunger is a way for home gardeners and commercial growers to contribute to Maine’s food security. More than 250,000 pounds of fresh produce were donated state-wide in 2012.

Newsletters

A number of newsletters are distributed to folks who live in Piscataquis County by either electronic mail or surface mail to help them learn about topics and programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newsletter</th>
<th>Electronic Distribution</th>
<th>Surface Mail Distribution</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-H Youth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
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<td>Farming</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eat Well</td>
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Local Partnership

Our County Extension Association is the vital link between the county, our communities and UMaine. The Association’s Executive Committee is comprised of local volunteers who represent community interests by advising UMaine Extension staff on educational programs, advocate for and secure funding from county government to support the county office, oversee the office budget and facilities, and guide UMaine Extension staff in identifying their programming goals.

Executive Committee
PRESIDENT: Walter Boomsma - Abbot
SECRETARY: Karen Dolley - Charleston
TREASURER: Janet Yelch-Weatherbee – Dover-Foxcroft
MEMBERS: Tish Dutson - Willimantic
George McKay – Dover-Foxcroft
Judy Merck – Dover-Foxcroft & Blanchard
Thelma Regan – Wellington
Wally Sinclair – Brownville

Piscataquis County Extension Association President’s Message

Friends and neighbors,

As you may know, the very name “Extension” is meant to identify our mission of extending the vast and varied resources of the University of Maine system into our local communities. It is my honor and pleasure to offer some observations regarding that challenge in this annual report to the citizens of Piscataquis County.

A unique aspect of UMaine Extension is that an Executive Committee of volunteers is charged with the responsibility for securing and managing county funds and support. This same committee, in collaboration with paid extension staff, serves as both a resource and a monitor to ensure programming is relevant to local needs and opportunities. In simple terms, our challenge is to “make sure our citizens get the most bang for their buck.”

During the past year, your Executive Committee and Extension Staff have worked hard to assess those needs and opportunities and develop plans to meet them. We know, for example, that farming and gardening continue to offer growth opportunities in Piscataquis County. We also
recognize a welcome obligation to develop the tremendous resource we have in our children and youth. Additionally, the Extension Program in general has identified the potential return on investment available from developing our Maine Food System – from farm to fork.

After careful consideration, we have made two important changes in the past year. The first includes both staffing and focus. We now have a full-time program aide (Ana Bonstedt) focusing on horticulture and another (Shelia Norman) focusing on our Youth/4-H programming. While these positions are not funded directly by county dollars, they are made possible by the support we receive from the county.

The second change is perhaps less concrete, but it is not at all subtle. We are consciously seeking ways to collaborate, work together, and overlap projects and programs to create efficiency. I’d encourage you to review the information regarding the school garden project at SeDoMoCha Elementary School in Dover Foxcroft as just one example. Nearly every aspect of Extension is in some way touching this garden.

Another unique aspect of Extension is our reliance on the involvement of volunteers ranging from Master Gardeners to 4-H Leaders. While University resources extend into our communities, it is the combining of resources and energy that makes us effective—whether we are talking about funding, programs, or people. Individually we are drops; together we form an ocean.

These are some of the reasons why we are able provide a good return on the investment we receive from Piscataquis County Taxpayers. We appreciate the building we occupy in the county complex and the county’s contribution to our operating and support costs. I would note that while we have little ability to control the costs associated with the building, our budget request for 2014 is responsible and our operating fund request remains at a level significantly below 2009. Not too many organizations I’m familiar with can boast of actually increasing services in an economy that contributes to the funding cuts we’ve experienced.

You are certainly part of everything we do. This brief report is really only an introduction and I’d encourage you to stop by the office, contact a staff or executive committee member and learn about the depth of our resources. Better yet, ask how you can help! There’s a place for everyone at UMaine Extension.

Walter Boomsma

President
Eat Well Nutrition Program

Kindergarten through fifth grade classes in Milo, Dover Foxcroft, Guilford, Brownville, and Greenville learned how to make healthy snacks and the importance of physical activity. The lesson focused on the “My Plate” program from USDA.

Families of young children learn how to make their food dollar go farther and provide good nutritious food for their families through individual or group lessons.

Dear Miss Felicia,

Thank you for coming to our class almost every other month to teach me and my classmates about nutrition. I hope I see you again next year or sometime soon. I really like about you is your kindness. If you have free time please write back.

your friend,
4-H Youth Development

With the help of youth volunteers, 207 4-H members in four clubs and two after school groups participated in 4-H in our county during the 2012-2013.

In August members got a chance to show off their 4-H project work and club exhibits at the Piscataquis Valley Fair. All fair-goers were given the opportunity to make a “bee hummer” to enjoy at home. Fair-goers were also given an opportunity to mark on a map where they were from. We have international visitors attending our fair!

A celebration of 4-H’s Centennial Anniversary featured fundraisers with Tractor Supply in Dover Foxcroft and paper clover sales in other local businesses. In 2013 we offered a special “Adventures in Health Science” program in collaboration with Mayo Regional Hospital and Charles A. Dean Hospital.

In Milo the HAWT Spot After-School Club for ages 13-18 is growing with the support of a National 4-H Foundation/Moline Healthcare Internship. An intern who was involved with 4-H as a junior at Penquis Valley High School returned to help start this club for youth in Milo.

Farm to School Programming

The FoodCorps service member funded by FoodCorps, Americorps State and National, and UMCE Penobscot and Piscataquis counties partnered with the Maine Highlands Farmers to sponsor two Farm to Cafeteria meetings which opened dialog between farmers and school cafeteria directors to source more local farm products. The school garden at SeDoMoCha has also grown to include four raised beds creating an outdoor classroom for lessons on gardening and healthy eating.

In collaboration with the Piscataquis Soil and Water Conservation District and Valley Grange the GrowME program brought hands-on agricultural lessons to kindergarten through third graders, reaching over 700 students in 40 classrooms.
Piscataquis County Funding

Each year, Piscataquis County tax dollars support the UMaine Extension with physical office space, support staff salaries, office supplies, and equipment and programming expenses. Those tax dollars make up approximately 19% of the budget for the Piscataquis County Office. How those funds are broken down is presented, along with a history of the investments being made in the Piscataquis County Office.

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<th>Piscataquis County Funding Support History</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>County Support</strong></td>
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<td>Operating Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building Costs</td>
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<td>County Total</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>State Support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Operating Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Budget</td>
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Statewide Extension Funding

University of Maine Cooperative Extension’s successful educational programs result from a federal, state and county government partnership.

Since 1919, when the Maine Legislature passed the County Extension Act*, the University of Maine has been in all Maine communities with a county office whose operations are funded by county government. Our educational programs anticipate and respond to local and state needs and issues. We also communicate those issues and opportunities to UMaine faculty to influence their research and development plans.
Sustainable Agriculture

Farming in Piscataquis County generates $6.5 million in sales of farm products from about 200 farms. Most farms in the county are small-scale, generating less than $5,000 in sales. Small-scale farms generally sell their farm products directly to consumers.

UMaine Extension has provided a variety of programs, newsletters, and one-to-one consultations to assist farmers and those who want to be farmers in the county. Topics include the business of agriculture, production, regulation, and marketing based on a wide variety of farming enterprises.

After attending the So You Want to Farm in Maine workshop series one farmer established a new Farmers’ Market in Greenville, thus giving the community an opportunity to buy fresh local produce from local farmers. Other farmers have shared stories of their increased confidence and accomplishments.

With the assistance of the UMaine Cooperative Extension, members of the Maine Highlands Farmers have established the Dover Cove Farmers Market and the Dover Cove Online Farm Marketplace.
New Farmers in Piscataquis County

Gene and Mary Margaret Ripley run an organic vegetable farm in Dover Foxcroft with one goal in mind: growing the best vegetables for local customers. They keep in touch with customers through their website http://www.ripleyorganicfarm.com and their Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/RipleyFarm. People can stay up to date on the crops being planted or harvested as well as find recipes for the vegetables being grown.

The Ripley’s tell us, “As organic farmers, we value the University of Maine Cooperative Extension as our top agricultural resource here in Piscataquis County. Being new farmers, we especially benefit from the office’s focus on facilitating networking and skill sharing between farmers, gardeners, and community members alike through programs such as the Maine Highlands Farmers, the You Can series and more.

Extension’s soil testing and pest and disease identification services are invaluable to our ability to grow healthy crops for the dozens of local families that rely on us for their seasonal veggies. Piscataquis County Cooperative Extension is truly an extension of our farm!

Eugene and Mary Margaret Ripley

Ripley Farm, Dover Foxcroft

“...The soil is the great connector of lives, the source and destination of all. It is the healer and restorer and resurrector, by which disease passes into health, age into youth, death into life. Without proper care for it we can have no community, because without proper care for it we can have no life.”

— Wendell Berry, The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture