Business Plan Sets Goals for a Sustainable County Extension Program

Members of the Greene County Extension Council met on Monday, Oct. 29, 2012, and voted unanimously to approve the first business plan written for a county extension council in Missouri. A committee of Greene County residents worked for several months on the business plan and looked at the long range needs of University of Missouri Extension in Greene County.

This business plan is in addition to existing bylaws and policies and looks at a business direction for the council that goes beyond the stream of revenue received from the county commission. The business plan is online at http://extension.missouri.edu/greene. The document outlines the present role of MU Extension in Greene County and steps council members have agreed to take in order to strengthen MU Extension locally.

Members of the Greene County Extension Council are also working on long-term goals to make the program sustainable. Greene County Extension programs improve the lives of individuals and positively impact the community. With the help of committed volunteers and key partnerships the goal is to keep the programs of Extension available in Greene County.

Learn more about the “Friends of Greene County Extension” campaign
Since 1914, Greene County residents have sought help from Extension on a variety of topics ranging from agriculture to youth. Members of “Friends of Greene County Extension” contribute financially to make it possible for Extension to continue having a positive impact on the quality of life in Greene County, Mo. To learn how you can help go online to http://extension.missouri.edu/greene/giving.aspx or call the Greene County Extension Center at (417) 881-8909.
Ongoing Community Benefits of Extension in Greene County

Extension Office Operations
1. Support personnel are available to answer various questions from an estimated 65 callers per day during the summer months and 30 callers per day other times of the year.
2. Citizens receive useful information and publications sent to them by mail and e-mail.
3. Plant analysis and entomology services are available to Greene County citizens.
4. There are facility or personnel to proctor tests for home school students, people completing their GEDs, and individuals working on their Master degrees.
5. Private Applicator is available to Greene County farmers and commercial growers to instruct them on the proper application and storage of pesticides and herbicides.
6. Farmers, home owners, commercial growers and commercial businesses (i.e. MoDOT, engineering firms, agriculture vendors, etc.) are able to submit soil samples for analysis.

Community Food Systems and Nutrition
1. MU Extension Family Nutrition Education Programs (FNEP) reached 41,200 low-income participants with direct nutrition education in Greene County during 2012.
2. A significant number of Greene County residents (44,981) also participated in these Extension programs through indirect teaching methods at venues like food pantries and school and community health fairs.
3. Nutrition education for youth provides information in kid-friendly terms and lessons with hands-on activities. Activities include opportunities for taste-testing healthy foods and practicing skills that lead to good health. Education for adults includes nutrition, food safety, physical activity, and food resource management.
4. MU Extension nutrition programs were held at over 75 different Greene County locations during 2012, including most school districts in Greene County, WIC clinics and more.
5. A nutrition specialist was moved to the Greene County Extension office in January 2013 to work on a grant from the USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI). The project is focused on enhancing food security in selected Missouri Communities, and working with Food Policy Councils.
6. Nutrition specialist works with Healthy Food Pantry Community Collaboration to provide nutrition and health training, resources and education to staff and clients of Food Pantries of Greene County.
7. An extension nutrition specialist also works with the Greene County Sustainable Food Coalition (groups of diverse area agencies) to provide safe, nutritious, sustainable food supply for Greene County residents.
**Children and Youth**

1. Almost a third (about 72 providers representing around 3,500 children) of all Greene County childcare operations receive childcare training from the Greene County Extension Center.
2. Greene County Extension Center training for the Foster Grandparent Program, that provides mentors and assistants in local schools.
3. Both rural and urban 4-H clubs and afterschool 4-H clubs are active in Greene County.
4. Annual programming for about 250 4-H youth (ages 8-18) in 996 projects guided and lead by 100 adult volunteers.
5. About 1,500 4-H exhibits are at the Greene County 4-H Fair, the Ozarks Empire Fair and Missouri State Fair. Programming for more than 25 4-H Clover Kids (ages 5-8). Summer camp for over 46 4-H members and about 23 Clover Kids.
6. Greene County Extension Center, provides a place to store 4-H resources and curriculum; for adult leaders and/or teen members to meet; and to accept club enrollments, trip applications and event entries.

**Master Gardeners**

1. Master Gardener telephone and e-mail services are provided by the Greene County Extension Center. The Master Gardener hotline which assists about 2,100 residents annually. Use of most office equipment by Master Gardeners to prepare educational materials are provided by the Greene County Extension Center.
2. Core training for more than 50 new Master Gardeners each year. Advanced training for over 250 existing Master Gardeners. Professional horticulture support is available to Master Gardeners who provided over 20,000 hours of volunteer service to our community last year.
3. Gardening education actually leads to a greater community interest in gardening and more spending on gardening related products. When it comes to per capita spending on gardening (supplies and plants), the City of Springfield actually ranks among the top three in the U.S.
4. Community gardening training programs like Missouri (MO) Gardens Series, Potting Shed University, and Young Sprouts in the Garden (a program for children).

**Sustainable Living**

1. Workshops and services related to sustainable living and urban homesteading (energy conservation, recycling, water conservation, food preservation).
2. Greene County Extension Center sustainable living advisory support to the following organizations, programs and/or committees: Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District, The Springfield/Greene County Environmental Collaborative, Community Partnership of the Ozark’s Housing Collaborative, Community Partnership of the Ozark’s Environmental Collaborative, and the Ozark Green Building Coalition.
3. The Springfield Plateau Chapter of the Master Naturalists Program boosts 60 members who work closely with the Missouri Conservation Department and Extension. The program engages Missourians in the stewardship of our state's natural resources through science-based education and community service. Missouri Master Naturalists are trained volunteers who support conservation efforts and natural resource education in their local communities.

4. Our website has research-based online resources related to sustainable living and urban homesteading that are normally available for free or at minimal costs.

**Community Development and information**

1. Greene County Extension Center specialists are available to offer group facilitation and team building services to Greene County, the City of Springfield and other organizations.
2. Training workshops for governmental officials through the Greene County Extension.
3. Greene County Extension Center community development advisory support is provided to the following organizations, programs and/or committees: Ozarks Technical College turf program, Ozark Empire Fair, Food Policy Coalition, Missouri State University Department of Agriculture, Friends of the Garden, Drury University’s Hammons School of Architecture, Community Partnership of the Ozark’s Homeless Taskforce, Rountree Neighborhood Association and the Ozarks Press Association.
4. The Missouri Historic Schools Alliance has 60 active members.
5. The Southwest Region News Service currently operates out of the Greene County office and uses a variety of techniques and tools to reach over 200,000 urban residents every week with research-based MU Extension information. Some of the tools used include an e-mailed weekly news service that reaches 9,000 – plus subscribers, the use of social medias like Facebook, Flickr, Linkedin and YouTube to reach an additional 2,000-plus people per week, three weekly columns in urban newspapers that reach an audience of over 130,000, our website which has nearly 500 visitors per week and regular interviews of MU Extension specialists on Springfield television and radio stations that expand our audience further.

**Miscellaneous**

1. Greene County Soils and Crops Conference for more than 100 area farmers and land owners.
2. Greene County receives about $450,000 in direct MU Extension support that benefits Greene County residents.
3. Helpful information is distributed by Greene County specialists to an estimated 20,000 people at community events.
4. Greene County Extension Center headquarters is at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center fulfilling a promise made to voters and benefactors.
Budget Cuts from County Commission Have Impacted the Programs Offered, Staff Available

University of Missouri fully funds the salaries, benefits, training, and computer support, for the five specialists headquartered in Greene County. Funds provided by the County Commission to the publicly elected Greene County Extension Council are used to pay for one administrative assistant and office expenses like the telephone, copies, office supplies, some postage and travel for specialists conducting programs.

In past years, when the County Commission was allocating $100,000 to the local Extension office, staff could say that for every $1 the County Commission allocates, the University of Missouri invests $15 back in to the county.

In 2009, the County allocated $95,000 to the publically elected Greene County Extension Council. The local office also generated about $25,000 as part of an annual office budget of $115,000, which was still a cut from previous years.

In 2010, the County Commission voted to allocate $27,000 to the local office as a savings measure and the local office began to draw heavily from reserve funds, even after making cuts. The Commission repeated the allocation of $27,000 (a 72% percent cut from previous years) with the 2011 budget.

In the 2012 county budget, the Greene County Extension Center was reduced to a $10,000 allocation and, despite strong public feedback, County Commissioners continued with that minimum level of funding in the 2013 county budget also.

By state law, every first class county funds an Extension office with a minimum of $10,000. That amount was set in 1961 and would actually be $72,000 if adjusted for inflation. The local Greene County Extension Council has instituted many cuts and revenue generating ideas over the past three or four years in an effort to balance the budget.

Educational programs at the Greene County Extension Center draw people from other counties in to Greene County where they spend money and then take what they have learned back home to improve their own communities. The regional specialists in the Greene County office conduct programs that impact the entire region but they also do good work for Greene County. From a regional perspective, the Greene County office is one of a flagships location so continued cuts of this size are especially troubling to MU Extension.

The Greene County Extension Council is working hard to raise additional operational funds, build an endowment fund that can support the program, and work with the Greene County Commission to again get Extension funding as a sustainable level.
Cuts Implemented in Past Four Years

- 2.5 clerical positions have been cut.

- In 2010, a 4-H Youth Program Assistant was moved to another county in order to directly save the county $15,000.

- Professional development funding for specialists was eliminated in 2009.


- The mileage reimbursement rate reduced below the IRS recommended amount, the supplies budget slashed by 75 percent and mailed publications eliminated.

- The Master Gardener and 4-H groups are picking up their own program costs to help reduce financial pressure on the County Council budget.

- Additional effort is being placed on generating revenue from fees, grants, contracts and other sources of revenue, which are sometimes counter to our mission.

- In 2012, the 4-H specialist in Greene County was moved to Polk County in order to have adequate support. As a result, support for existing 4-H clubs and training in Greene County has decreased significantly.

- A number of educational classes have been cut or reduced, like training for childcare operators, 4-H volunteer training and a number of agriculture programs.

- Number of office phones lines reduced 75% and the price for soil tests increased nearly $15 per sample.

Office located in the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center
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Tel: (417) 881-8909
Fax (417) 881-8058
http://extension.missouri.edu/greene
Office hours:
Monday - Friday * 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Come visit our new location.