

Montana

policy REVIEW

Developing
Leadership
at All Levels



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S P R I N G 2 0 1 4

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TABLE OF contents

Introduction	1
The 1940's Montana Study Transformed Conrad and Influenced Participatory Research and Study Groups <i>Jan Counter and Lynn Paul</i>	2
Montana 4-H... 100 Years and Counting <i>Allison Kosto</i>	4
Unleashing Community Leadership Potential: The Role of the Local Community Foundation <i>Rae Lynn Hayes</i>	7
Youth Leadership Development in Agricultural Education <i>Shannon Arnold</i>	10
Developing Rural Leaders: The Montana KEEP Experience <i>Verne House</i>	12
REAL Montana Continues a Legacy of Leadership <i>Janelle Booth</i>	16



Introduction

The strength of a rural community lies in its citizens. Building a network of local leaders has many benefits for Montana, including increased involvement in community affairs, ability to address concerns collectively, and a greater shared understanding of issues facing the state. Additionally, leadership roles aid in the development of critical skills such as communication, conflict management, and marketing, as well as promoting individuals to seek innovation and collaboration in their public and private lives.

This edition of the Montana Policy Review examines past, current, and future efforts to develop leadership at all levels. Leadership education, particularly in rural settings, remains an under-studied and under-utilized tool of community and economic development. The following articles feature ideas and initiatives that address the need to establish and cultivate leaders while identifying opportunities and challenges with various models. It is our hope that these articles, and the individuals featured in them, will provide continued inspiration to the people of Montana to realize the oft-cited adage, “You don’t need a title to be a leader.”

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The 1940s Montana Study:

Transformed Conrad and Influenced Participatory Research and Study Groups

By Jan Counter and Lynn Paul

I had just received a note on my desk that read “I had a StrongWomen Program...at Horizon Lodge, an assisted living center in Conrad, MT. There were six to eight regulars who attended. One lady reported that the strength training made such an improvement that she was able to open jars again!” This 2013 note was from a Montana Extension agent describing the outcome of StrongWomen, an effective and popular strength training program for middle-aged and older adults (Sequin, Heidkamp-Young, Kuder, and Nelson, 2012). A group of individuals making change in themselves and their communities is not a new concept for Conrad. Indeed, the location of the program mentioned by the agent, the Horizon Lodge Retirement and Assisted Living Facility, was the result of the community study and action group born from the 1943 Montana Study. In 2013, Conrad has many facilities that resulted from the Montana Study, evidence of the long-term benefits and outcomes of these community groups.



StrongWomen is an effective and popular strength training program for middle-aged and older adults.

The Montana Study of 1943

The Montana Study was a research project designed to find ways higher education and humanities could improve life in rural communities by helping assess and develop social, economic, and cultural resources. The research, which took place in the 1940s, had the ultimate goal of stabilizing small, rural communities. Since the 1920s, Montana had suffered from drought, the Great Depression, and migration of farm families from Eastern Montana (Poston, 1950).

This Montana Study was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and was implemented by Ernest Melby, Chancellor of the University of Montana. At that time, the research project was unique because it utilized participatory research involving community members in a study group who define the program and gather, analyze, and interpret data. Ten Montana communities participated in the study group process: Arlee, Conrad, Darby, Dixon, Hamilton, Lewistown, Libby, Lolo, Stevensville, and Victor (Counter 1991, 1-7).

Each community followed a ten-week study period where they researched, analyzed, and synthesized the following:

- The composition of the community as to nationality, history, occupation, religion, politics, education, and recreation;
- How churches, school, lodges, clubs, and recreation played a part in human companionship and how those human connections could be expanded;
- The different ways people made a living and how they used their resources;
- The relationship of the community with the state and nation;

- The future possibilities for community and state;
- How action could facilitate change by helping to find ways to “gain control over means of making a living and developing the cultural and artistic aspects within the community;”
- The ability of the group in gathering information, discussing, and using it in a constructive action (Brownell, Howard, and Meadows, 1944).

The Montana Study was successful in creating several assemblies, but only Conrad’s initial study group led to a community action group actively engaged in projects that met community needs determined by Montana Study process. In Conrad, the study group was held in 1945. Challenged by rapid change, the group first examined the important and sustainable values of pioneers in that area. The group concluded the values and traditions important to this study and action process would be similar to the pioneers’ and included:

- The pioneers solved their own problems.
- The pioneers established true friendships in the sanctuaries of their own community.
- The pioneers were visionaries, but stable and knew the proper values in life.
- The pioneers accepted the modern, but measured it in the lights of the true and tried.
- [The pioneers] remember[ed] the solid, progressive community is subject to exploitation and guard[ed] against it (Marsh, 1945).

These values became the guidelines for Conrad’s action group, the Pondera Education and Recreation Association.

Impacts from the Montana Study

In the 1980s, leaders in the community development and health education professions were seeking new methods of creating healthy, stabilized, and economically-sound communities (Minkler, 1989). A quasi-longitudinal case study of Conrad was conducted in 1988 by Counter (1991) and her research team from the MSU Kellogg Center for Adult Learning Research. The purpose of this research study was to determine if Montana Study methods were viable for adult education and community development. Historical analysis of primary documents and oral histories with people who had participated in Conrad’s study and action groups were conducted, with all of the interviewees in their eighties. The MSU researchers discovered that the Conrad action group had remained proactive for over 40 years. Outcomes of this group included a nursing home, retirement apartment complex, senior center, swimming pool, irrigation system, and high school. The action group process learned from the Montana Study allowed the group to learn new skills in discussing issues, conflict management, and research and to share their

own divergent skills with the group. They developed networks and identified resources within the community, state, and nation. On a personal level, they traded roles and built confidence in their leadership skills. Group members reported they had fun and satisfaction putting it all together (Counter, Paul, and Conti, 1991).

The evidence of the long-term success of the Conrad action group remains, notably the town's infrastructure such as the Horizons Lodge and the swimming pool. The success of the Montana Study created interest for other Montana and national groups to replicate and improve upon the process. Most notably, the Montana Study influenced an emerging new health paradigm, 'Healthy Cities,' founded by Drs. Leonard Duhl and Trevor Hancock (Duhl, 1996; Norris & Pittman, 2000). The new movement identified the need for community-based change to alleviate core problems of health and not just treat symptoms one patient at a time (Minkler, 1989). Duhl had researched the Montana Study and utilized aspects of it while developing 'Healthy Cities' and 'Healthy Communities.' He attended the annual Montana Public Health Association Conference in the 1990s and while discussing Healthy Cities, drew references to the Montana Study and its importance on creating an approach to community involvement and action.

The Montana Horizons Program: 2004-2010

From 2004 to 2010, MSU Extension conducted a successful community-based program called 'Horizons' (Lachapelle, 2011). Whether or not the Montana Study has a direct link to the recent success of Horizons, the principles and strategies are strikingly similar. The goals of each study reflect improving or "stabilizing" rural communities. Both studies used the study group process in economically-challenged rural communities to ultimately improve conditions. In both studies, some

study groups formed into successful action groups. Each study utilized higher education to provide a research framework that encouraged local citizens to examine their communities. In the Montana Study, community members researched the humanities, specifically their community's cultural and historical traditions and values. Participants in the Horizons project studied what poverty is, what it looked like locally, and what residents wanted to do to reduce poverty in their communities (Webb, 2012). Using higher education is still a venue for helping rural communities identify their needs (Seifer, 2000).

What have we learned about community leadership?

Whether it be the Horizon Lodge in Conrad or development of the Healthy Cities and Healthy Communities projects, the Montana Study continues to influence community development processes. Recommendations from the 1980s quasi-longitudinal research stated the need to continue examining what methods work for our changing culture to successfully transform communities through community-based participatory research (Counter 1991). The factor that remains constant in these examples is leadership is necessary to examine community issues and bring people to the table.

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Early corn growing contests created healthy competition and ways to teach evaluation of quantity and quality. Photo courtesy Montana 4-H archives.

Montana 4-H... 100 Years and Counting



By Allison Kosto

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

- **A positive relationship with a caring adult**
- **An inclusive environment**
- **A safe emotional and physical environment**
- **Opportunity for mastery**
- **Engagement in learning**
- **Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future**
- **Opportunity for self-determination**
- **Opportunity to value and practice service to others**

In 2012, Montana 4-H celebrated one hundred years of making a positive impact on the lives of youth in this great state. 4-H began in 1902 in Ohio, and in the early years it was a very agricultural- and home economics-based organization in rural areas, helping youth learn life skills. At that time, youth were taught specific skills to use on the farm/ranch or in the home. Today, 4-H has grown and expanded to meet the changing needs of society and has a strong presence in both rural and urban areas. The program continues to concentrate on teaching life skills. The difference is today, these are viewed as skills that youth will use no matter their life choices or career path, such as leadership, citizenship, communication, teamwork, and problem solving. 4-H continues to have a strong presence in rural communities and helps contribute to tomorrow's leaders.

Positive Youth Development

One of the fundamental principles of 4-H is utilizing positive youth development. Youth development can simply be defined as the process a young person goes through to reach adulthood. Youth have many needs in their daily lives - emotional, social, intellectual and physical - and will work to find ways to meet their needs. Youth development can take place in formal or informal settings ranging from school to hanging out with friends. Adults, whether parents, teachers or community members, can help play a role by guiding youth to meeting these needs. Providing a series of intentional positive opportunities for youth development is key to these individuals becoming successful adults.

Essential Elements

In addition to positive youth development, 4-H emphasizes eight essential elements into all programming efforts.

Just one element alone is not enough to create that environment. All of these elements are crucial to a positive youth development program that helps young people become competent adults.

Delivering the Program

4-H began as a local effort in Ohio schools with corn and tomato clubs. Youth utilized new research to increase quality agricultural production in these crops. The clubs soon started working with the university to obtain current information. The land grant universities caught on to the success of these clubs and began to get more involved with organizing similar clubs in other areas. Around this same time in the early 1900s, the idea of the Cooperative Extension Service (CES) began to take place with Seaman A. Knapp's work in educational outreach in Texas. In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act was passed, providing financial support for CES and a home for 4-H. After this point in time, the idea and format of 4-H become more formalized. By 1918, 4-H club membership passed 500,000 youth nationwide.

The origins of 4-H in Montana were very similar to other areas of the nation. Youth corn clubs studied new research and agricultural practices in rural schools. Many of the early clubs in Montana were called "Boys and Girls Clubs." In 1913, Montana had its first Extension Agent, M.L. Wilson, working east of Billings, and in 1914, the first official 4-H Club, a canning club, started in Forsyth.



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4 McCoy, B. (2012). Past, Present Possibilities: Exploring 100 Years of Montana 4-H. Bozeman MT: Montana State University Extension.

In recognition of the Montana 4-H Centennial, Betty McCoy, former state 4-H program leader from 1988-2004, wrote a collection of the state 4-H history. The book is available through MSU Extension Publications with proceeds going to the Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development.

The club format has remained strong as the principal delivery method of 4-H. Many of the early 4-H clubs were school programs. Today, clubs in Montana are primarily community organizations and not organized by school officials, although clubs still take place in a school setting in many other areas of the country. 4-H clubs are also seen in afterschool programs and on military installations. In a 4-H club, youth elect peer officers, participate in educational and recreational activities, select 4-H project work, emphasize service learning, and learn new skills. Clubs are focused on youth and facilitated by adult volunteer leaders.

The 4-H program has also expanded into other delivery methods. These delivery methods include school enrichment, camps, and special interest groups. Utilizing multiple delivery methods allows the 4-H program to reach and impact even more youth. Some of these youth may not be interested or have the ability to participate in the traditional 4-H club program, but can still benefit from 4-H learning in other ways. Currently, 4-H reaches nearly 23,000 youth in Montana through various delivery methods, making it the largest out-of-school youth development organization in the state.



5 Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development, Annual Extension Youth Enrollment Report, 2011-2012.

6 Montana 4-H Center for Youth Development, Annual Extension Youth Enrollment Report, 2011-2012.

7 Nippolt, P. L., Pleskac, S., Schwartz, V. & Swanson, D. (April 2012). North Central Region 4-H Volunteers: Documenting Their Contributions and Volunteer Development. *Journal of Extension* [online], 50 (2), Article 2BIB2. Retrieved November 18, 2013 from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2012april/rb2.php>.

8 Lerner, R. & Lerner, J. (2012). *The Positive Youth Development: The Report of Findings from the First Eight Years of the 4-H Positive Youth Development Study*. Boston: Tufts University, Institute of Applied Research for Youth Development. Retrieved November 15, 2013 from <http://www.4-h.org/about/youth-development-research/positive-youth-development-study/>

There are a multitude of projects for 4-H youth. A 4-H project allows youth to get an in-depth hands-on experience in a particular subject area. The 4-H project areas are based around three mission initiatives of science, healthy living and citizenship. They range from animal science to wind energy to photography to robotics. Youth have the opportunity to choose their projects and work closely with adult volunteers who serve as mentors with the youth. Even though the projects often focus on a particular topic, youth learn a magnitude of life skills such as record keeping, problem solving, communication and empathy.



Utilizing Adult Volunteers

The Montana 4-H program is made possible through nearly 4,000 adult volunteer leaders. Working with MSU Extension faculty, 4-H adult volunteers serve as facilitators or guides to provide positive learning experiences for youth. Their roles include club organizational leader, project leader, activity/event leader, afterschool coordinator, Advisory Council Member or whatever the need is in that county. Not only do these adults have the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of youth, they also aid in the direction of the local 4-H program, have personal training and development opportunities, build relationships with youth and their families, and watch young people learn and grow. Most volunteers find this experience has a positive influence on their personal lives as well.

Building Leadership Life Skills

Research has shown that 4-H members continue to utilize the skills learned in 4-H into adulthood. A survey done in rural Montana communities with populations of 15,000 or less showed that 4-H alumni rated their 4-H experiences as one of the main factors that contributed to their success as community leaders. The 4-H experiences that had the greatest impact on community leaders included conducting meetings, developing leadership skills and participating in community activities.



This study also revealed that the impact of 4-H was especially strong among leaders of community agricultural groups. In many rural Montana communities, agriculture remains a strong industry.

There is a need to build young leaders in this area as the population in agricultural careers continues to age. The 2007 Census of Agriculture identified that the average age of farmers and ranchers in Montana is 57.8 years old, which is up from 55.7 in 2002. Strong young leaders who will work in agriculture as well as other industries are needed to combat this aging trend. 4-H and other youth organizations are key to providing these development opportunities.

Youth in our local communities are already making big impacts. Through the 4-H program, youth are creating a cleaner environment, raising money for good causes, organizing community efforts and helping those in need. In addition to selecting Leadership as a 4-H Project option, there are many leadership opportunities including becoming a 4-H club officer, serving as a 4-H County Ambassador, leading workshops, mentoring younger members and serving in statewide leadership positions. Through the leadership project, youth develop the skills to identify a need in their community or program and create and implement a plan of action

to accomplish their goals. Each youth can choose the activities that fit their interests and schedule since many of these youth also participate in other organizations in and out of school.

Montana 4-H has changed a lot in 100 years. No one probably predicted at the time of the program's inception that robotics and aerospace would become popular 4-H projects. It is hard to imagine what the next decade will bring. However, based on the many years of experience and outcomes, 4-H will continue to impact the lives of youth, providing a positive platform to build life skills and shape the leaders of the future.

4-H is present in every county and reservation in the state of Montana and is the youth development program of Montana State University Extension. To find your local MSU Extension office, visit www.msuxextension.org or www.montana4h.org for more information.

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Unleashing Potential Community Leadership:

The Role of the Local Community Foundation

By Rae Lynn Hayes

Throughout history, community leaders have been credited with pooling resources to provide solutions to local problems. Whether the issue was an invading army, a lack of sufficient food supply, or a failing governing body, the communities that survived and thrived amid challenges relied upon the strategic direction and execution of leaders' ideas.

Although Montana towns may be facing different challenges today, the need for leadership, financial resources, and collective individual efforts are still required to sustain thriving communities. One strategy for cultivating these assets involves the use of local community foundations.

This article presents a brief background on the history and current opportunities of community foundations as well as connections to community leadership. Specific examples relating to work in Montana are provided.

Background of Community Foundations

In 1914, Frederick H. Goff, a local attorney and banker, exhibited innovative leadership when he pioneered the concept of a community trust to improve the lives of people in the city of Cleveland. His idea stemmed from his frustration with irrevocable wills that contrasted with the community's evolving values.

Goff's vision was to combine the charitable resources from community members, both living and dead, into a permanent endowment governed by a board of local individuals. The resulting Cleveland Community Foundation quickly impacted the fate of its community. Within a decade, the foundation conducted numerous studies that resulted in judicial and educational reforms. One such reform empowered girls to receive an equal education (The Cleveland Foundation, 2013).

Nearly one hundred years later, local community foundations still play a critical role in facilitating community leadership potential. The correlation is true not only in metropolitan areas such as Cleveland, but also in rural regions like Culbertson, Montana.

According to a study comparing rural communities, (Ricketts & Place, 2009), four significant factors set successful communities apart from ones that are not thriving: effective communication, development of social capital (commonly defined by the degree of trust,



reciprocity, and networking), community engagement, and collaboration across and within communities.

These four components provide areas of focus for leadership development and enhancement.

Community foundations possess a unique ability to facilitate the development of these core leadership qualities, contributing to the success of a given community. A community foundation by definition is a philanthropic organization working in a specified geographic area to pool financial resources for the purpose of building a permanent endowment, from which to draw interest to grant funds toward community investments, thereby improving the lives of people within a community.

Local boards, ideally reflective of the area that they serve, govern community foundations. These boards are responsible for using private and public donations to make a coordinated investment in an effort to build an endowment. This form of philanthropic leadership enables communities to combine donations that can be used to develop projects chosen and implemented by community members. As a result, local residents leave a lasting legacy to future generations. Thus, community foundations facilitate the changes needed to increase social capital (Easterling, 2008).

Community foundations assist donors by helping them identify their charitable interests. Once the donor's gift is invested, interest earnings are used in the form of grants to fund projects that match the donor's charitable interests. The community foundation solicits applications from non-profits, manages the grant-making process and evaluates the grantees' progress in implementing its goals.

A community foundation is not managed or influenced by other organizations, charities, or government entities. This type of organization remains focused on the improvement of the larger "community" rather than the narrow special interests of specific groups and individuals.

Community foundation members are typically rooted with history, credibility, and a vast network of connections. This role provides members with a unique opportunity to identify problems as well as the assets needed to provide critical solutions to issues facing local communities. Additionally, a community foundation may be the first organization to convene groups to carry out this work and provide training or coaching efforts to build capacity within the area.

Community foundation members with strong connections to their neighborhoods may also possess a deeper understanding of the political dynamics and inter-organizational relationships to foster impactful collaborations. This type of leadership is essential for mobilizing community assets and implementing change efforts. Perhaps most importantly, community foundations allow for the critical conversation and engagement in a community about the past, present and future needs and desires in the community.

Why is the leadership of a community foundation critical at this time?

By the year 2020, it is estimated that \$12 billion will transfer from one generation to the next. Montana community foundations are conducting Transfer of Wealth events throughout the state to inform people about opportunities to shape the future of the community that helped them acquire a portion of that wealth. For example, if donors left just five percent of the aforementioned \$12 billion to a charitable endowment, \$31 million would be available to be granted each year. Within the next 50 years, \$123 billion is projected to transfer to the next generation. If five percent is endowed, \$307 million could be available each year with the principal remaining intact forever (Macke, 2012).

Another factor to consider with regard to Montana's wealth is its aging population. By 2030, approximately 25% of Montanans will be 65 years of age and older. Although some of these individuals grew up close to the community in which they were born, many of their heirs now live out of state. Therefore, much of this wealth could leave Montana if it is not left to a charitable endowment.



How does a community benefit from establishing a community foundation?

Planned Gifts. With an endowment, communities increase the ability to secure funds that address local priorities. A community foundation can accept planned gifts such as cash, stocks, bonds, life insurance policies or property that will transfer to the foundation at some point in the future. Unlike many states, Montana provides significant tax savings to donors through the Montana Endowment Tax Credit. Community foundation members communicate with CPAs, attorneys, bankers, brokers, and funeral home directors about these benefits and the opportunity to leave a lasting legacy that shapes the future of rural communities throughout Montana.

Outside Resources. A community foundation can also attract outside resources such as corporate gifts, foundation grants, and government funding, or financial awards resulting from legal decisions. This type of structured organization provides a credible venue for managing large financial transactions to benefit the community in situations such as natural disasters, court settlements, or matching funds from other institutions.

Flexibility. With an endowment, a community foundation is an organization with the ability to accept funds as well as provide funds. Nonprofits such as youth clubs, community development groups or civic organizations within a community may express interest in applying for grants but do not qualify because they lack the ability to accept financial resources. A community foundation can assist by serving as a fiscal agent for these "pass-through" funds. As a leader in the community, a foundation can also match organizations with common purposes, resources, and needs.

An endowment allows a community foundation to provide financial resources to community groups without the government restrictions. This practice enables a community to have local control and define the parameters of the project. The community decides which issues are the most pressing and how best to support them.

A Culture of Giving. Establishing a community foundation builds a framework for philanthropy. The success of a community foundation is reliant upon small as well as large gifts. This culture of philanthropy can be nurtured by encouraging youth involvement on foundation boards and organizational activities.

Economic Garden. A community foundation helps to build, grow, and manage assets that contribute to the sustainability of a community. Regardless of what happens to government funding or local employment opportunities, an endowment established by a community foundation is permanent and devoted to developing a thriving community. Not only does a community foundation focus on the present, it is structured to provide support beyond the lifetime of any of its members, leaving a lasting leadership legacy.

Building Community Capacity through Local Community Foundations in Montana

To enhance the efforts of local community foundations, the Montana Community Foundation (MCF), the Anaconda Local Development Corporation and Montana State University Extension partnered recently to secure a \$150,000 grant from the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative. MCF and MSU Extension are each contributing \$75,000 to expand existing leadership, philanthropy and community engagement efforts in Montana communities.

This collaboration provides leadership and training opportunities to local community foundations throughout the state. The first 16 local community foundations that complete the program requirements (100 hours of training, a transfer of wealth event, and creation of a strategic plan) within three years will receive a \$1,000 incentive grant to continue efforts that cultivate leadership and philanthropy throughout the state.

In summary, community foundations can promote leadership by engaging community members to communicate about the past and current community assets, have a directed discussion of a vision for the future, and devise a strategic plan on the specific collective actions necessary regarding a foundation's role in unleashing the community's leadership potential.

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Youth Leadership Development in Agricultural Education

By Shannon Arnold

A prism is “a transparent solid body, often having triangular bases, used for dispersing light into a spectrum or for reflecting rays of light” (Webster, 1999). There are many faces to a prism, and although similar in shape, each has its own unique colors and reflections depending on how you look at it. As a prism is turned, each side can become something new and different, yet remain the same. I believe a prism directly reflects the idea of leadership. Leadership depends on how one perceives growth, change, and opportunity. As we engage in various life experiences, we learn to develop our own style and identity as a leader. As a result, a leader, like a prism, can be seen in many different ways, but still have the same qualities.

When asked to write an article on youth leadership, I began thinking about what leadership means and how youth not only engage in the process, but act as leaders. Kouzes and Posner (2007), authors of the best-selling novel “The Leadership Challenge,” outline their five practices of leadership:

- Model the Way
- Inspire a Shared Vision
- Challenge the Process
- Enable Others to Act
- Encourage the Heart

In “Model the Way,” leaders must clarify their values and set the example for others; “Inspire a Shared Vision” focuses on envisioning the future and enlisting others to bring it to life; “Challenge the Process” allows all to search for opportunities, experiment, and take risks to learn from experience; “Enable Others to Act” includes fostering collaboration and strengthening others; and “Encourage the Heart” highlights the need to recognize contributions and celebrate the values and victories (2007). Northouse (2004) describes high quality interactions between leaders and followers as a focal point in the leadership process to help advance organizational goals and provide direction. He also states that leaders influence others to reach a common goal and make an impact on the lives of those being led. There are many theories, approaches, and conceptualizations of leadership and each contributes its own unique elements.

Considering the various definitions and perspectives on leadership, I would like to address the following questions in this

article: (a) Who is involved in leadership development of agricultural youth (in Montana and beyond)? (b) What does leadership look like? (c) How do youth engage in the leadership process? These questions have different answers depending on who you ask. My goal is to provide a broad range of perspectives on these ideas based on research, personal involvement, and expert insight.

Who is involved in the leadership development of agricultural youth (in Montana and beyond)?

Families, peers, agriculture teachers, professors, advisors, Extension agents, employers - all of these people have an impact on youth leadership growth. Whether it be in the classroom, the hayfield, at home, in church, at after-school practice, or during a state contest, youth are being influenced by someone, somewhere all the time. Northouse (2004) and Kouzes and Posner (2007) both agree that leadership is about interpersonal relationships. How can we help youth to develop their communication, leadership, decision making, and time management skills? In college, youth have the opportunity to become involved in student groups such as Collegiate FFA and 4-H, Ag Student Council, Alpha Gamma Rho, Collegiate Young Farmers and Ranchers, and Environmental Resource Club. These organizations not only help youth to develop critical leadership skills, but also provide valuable learning experiences about the importance of giving back to the community. MSU College of Agriculture Student Services Director Jessica Murdock explained, “The College of Agriculture faculty and staff strive to provide numerous opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and become truly engaged in their undergraduate experience. Through undergraduate research, internships, course work, student organizations, leadership conferences and more, we hope to challenge and inspire them to get the most out of their education and experience. Students are encouraged to conduct critical self-analysis and participate in many extracurricular activities in each of our undergraduate and graduate degree programs (personal communication, October 28, 2013).” We all play an integral role in the development of our future leaders. As a result, we must not only offer opportunities for youth to become effective leaders, but give them guidance and support to develop skills.

A Montana State University Student teaching youth about insects at a service learning program.



What does leadership look like?

Just like a prism, leadership comes in many shapes, sizes, and forms. There is no one formula to define a leader and no one correct definition of leadership. Northouse (2004) defines various leadership theories such as the trait approach, skills approach, style approach, situational approach, contingency theory, path-goal theory, leader-member exchange theory, transformational leadership, and servant leadership. Why are there so many? Is it because leadership can be explained by several factors and influences? Regardless of the reason, leadership can be seen in agricultural education every day. Two common forms of leadership are those with an assigned formal title, and those that are emergent leaders which result from what one does and how one acquires support from followers. Assigned leaders can be club officers, ambassadors, or state contest winners. Emergent leaders might include the student who mentors others after school, offers ideas on how to improve the agriculture program, or volunteers to assist with every activity. Again, educators must realize that all youth can be leaders in their own ways; however, youth may not seek out the opportunity for formal leadership. It is our responsibility as mentors to encourage youth to apply for leadership positions, recommend them for awards, ask for their assistance with special projects, and most importantly, develop their self-confidence as a leader.

Additionally, we must think outside of the box as to how to engage youth in non-traditional experiences as well. By engaging youth in new experiences beyond agriculture, youth can improve their life and leadership skills and learn to apply them in different situations (Bruce, Nicola, & Menke, 2006). Examples may include becoming involved in student government, hosting study abroad students, serving on advisory boards, or participating in local community service. Reflecting on her recent leadership experiences, Ashley Powell, an MSU Agricultural Education graduate student, stated, "It is because of agricultural education that I not only learned about leadership theories and concepts, but it is through agricultural education, in my graduate program, that this knowledge is almost instinctively implemented on a daily basis. By way of everyday interactions with students, colleagues, and university stakeholders, the leadership concepts and theories learned have become embedded in my daily practice of developing others, resulting in the development of a better self." Whatever the context, it is important to focus on how to develop leadership skills for youth from a youth perspective (Bruce, Nicola, & Menke, 2006).

How do agricultural youth engage in the leadership process?

Leadership development is a continuous process that we engage in throughout our life. From Cloverbuds to 4-H and FFA, to collegiate organizations to community positions, we have all experienced leadership influences from a variety of perspectives, persons, and programs.

Agricultural education offers a multitude of activities: career development events, officer positions, volunteer service, state contests, workshops, recruitment activities, advisory councils, 4-H projects, International 4-H Youth Exchange, 4-H Congress, conferences and forums, that all allow youth to become leaders. As advisors and teachers, it is important for us to embrace these experiences not as separate activities, but as comprehensive youth development programs.

In-school and out-of-school, agricultural youth are learning to become future leaders of the next generation. Mary Anne Keyes, MSU 4-H Youth Development Agent in Park County, commented on the importance of agricultural education programs for the future, "It is important to recognize that 4-H and FFA programs may be the only formal educational experience where youth learn important leadership skills. The impact of this education can be seen in the community as these individuals become active participants on weed boards, school boards, and leaders in business organizations. They understand leadership principles and know how to integrate these skills into other areas of life to positively affect society." Youth develop in different ways through unique experiences provided by those that advise, teach, and mentor them.

How can you "Make the best better" and "Make a positive difference in the lives of youth by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education?" Although the approaches to leadership may vary, the goal of every leader involves the "refraction and dispersement" of light to inspire followers. I hope you get an opportunity to provide a prism of leadership light to agricultural education!

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Montana State University College of
Ambassadors Recruitment Event



Developing Rural Leaders:

THE MONTANA KEEP EXPERIENCE

By Verne W. House and M.E. Quenemoen

A leader is one who brings resources to bear on a common problem.

“Dear (MSU) President Cruzado, I want to tell you about something special Montana State University did for me 40 years ago.” These words grace the cover of collected “Letters from the 1971-1974 Kellogg Grant Participants.”¹ Forty years on,² a few class members of the first Kellogg Extension Education Project (KEEP) study/travel groups returned to MSU to share what they now see in their rear view mirrors.

Letters such as this reveal what life was like in rural Montana 40 years ago, in addition to the life-shaping lessons participants of KEEP experienced, what they did consequent to KEEP, and the public benefits to their communities and organizations. While many of these personal observations read differently than formal evaluations, they are consistent with the message that Extension plays a vital role in building leadership capacity.

Forty years ago, Montana State University Cooperative Extension Service was a national leader in rural leadership development because of the Kellogg Extension Education Project (KEEP). Montana then was even more a rural state constrained by the high costs of space. One hundred years ago, the Smith-Lever Act³ welded utilitarian Extension education to the teaching and research functions of land grant universities. KEEP was a complement to the land grant mission. Smith and Lever wrote their Act to assist people to apply research findings to farming and rural life. Section 5 later specified that each land grant university Extension Service’s “plan of work” must consult Extension “students” to focus on “critical issues.”⁴ Thus, Smith-Lever inverted the classroom teaching process: Extension “students” would tell the teachers what they wanted to learn. Extension’s role became, as Barry Flinchbaugh phrased it, “to help the people put legs on their ideas.”⁵

1 Correspondence. “Letters from the 1971-1974 Kellogg Grant Participants,” Montana State University Extension, presented 12 August 2013.

2 August 12, 2013 reunion at MSU.

3 The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 provided for outreach endeavors at the Land-Grant Universities founded by the Morrill Act of 1862. The act was introduced by Senator Hoke Smith of Georgia and Representative A. F. Lever of South Carolina to expand the vocational, agricultural, and home demonstration programs in rural America.

4 Smith-Lever Act, PL 107-293, November 13, 2002. Section 5. <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/about/offices/legis/pdfs/smithlev.pdf>

5 Dr. Flinchbaugh was Extension Public Policy Specialist at Kansas State University.

Context and Content of Extension Leadership Programs

Education involves teachers, learners, content, and context. Extension education differs from classroom education in context and content. Teachers must tailor content to the context and because the learners are adults, they choose the topic. Adults interested in leadership – for example, managing a cooperative board or electing a candidate for county commissioner or shaping the next Farm Bill – want information and skills specific to their purpose.

Rural leaders in Montana have to cope with aridity, space, sparseness, thin institutions, and some thick heads. To gain change, or even hold the status quo, they also must agree among themselves and often appeal to leaders in urban centers. The rural context is critical, both for the leaders and their educators.

Given the context 40 years ago, KEEP was designed with two tracks. Throughout long winters beginning in 1972, groups of about 30 adults trekked across the plains and through the mountains to Bozeman for week-long seminars. Most came for Rex Campbell’s popular “communication workshops.” The second track consisted of six groups of 30 people who took part in intensive, multi-year, study/travel groups.⁶ Many KEEPers came to dig into a current Montana issue in the annual public affairs forum.⁷

Gene Quenemoen was the first director of KEEP. Leroy Luft, who later became Extension Director, coordinated the first study/travel group.⁸ Verne House was the second director.

6 Six percent of participants were members of Montana tribes.

7 Topics: Economic Growth; Food, Hunger & Foreign Policy; Montana and the Rest of the World; and Collective Bargaining in the Public Sector.

8 Study-Travel Group Coordinators: I: Dr. Leroy Luft; II: Dr. Gene Quenemoen; III: Dr. Jim Sargent; IV: Mr. Rex Campbell; V: Dr. Verne House; and VI: Dr. Andrea Pagenkopf.

How KEEP Began

How did KEEP begin?⁹ In 1969, Quenemoen attended an agricultural policy seminar in Virginia sponsored by the Chicago based Farm Foundation. At this conference, he reconnected with a Dutton, MT farm boy, Ed Rossmiller, then an agricultural economist at Michigan State University. Ed was leading a “young farmer” leadership-training project funded in part by the Kellogg Foundation.

Could such a project fly in Montana? Quenemoen brought the idea to Torlief Aasheim, Director of the Montana Extension Service. Director Aasheim believed leadership development should be a major function of Land Grant universities and was already supporting “Women’s Week” and “Leadership Training Workshops” under the direction of Vivienne Kintz and Rex Campbell respectively.

Director Aasheim asked Quenemoen to draft a “young farmer” leadership training proposal like Michigan’s. Young farmers would participate in various on-campus study activities followed by some travel to observe community action projects in Montana and the nation. Draft proposals were circulated throughout the MSU campus and county extension offices. Although leadership training remained the focus of the proposal, the people targeted for training, the teaching staff and the subject matter underwent significant change. Whereas the initial draft was largely agricultural and male oriented, the proposal became co-educational, focused on general community leadership, and included international study-travel.

After many revisions the proposal was enthusiastically endorsed by Dean of Agriculture Joe Asleson and President Carl McIntosh. Kellogg Foundation officials visited campus several times and approved the grant. Implementation began in 1971.

KEEP Fellows

The first group of 30 fellows selected for a three-year commitment to a study-travel group arrived on the MSU campus in January 1972. Over the next five years, fellowships were awarded to five more study-travel groups. KEEP also awarded 150 fellowships each year for the one-week leadership workshops led by Rex Campbell.

County and Reservation extension agents identified people interested in participating. Communications workshop participants were chosen based on written applications. Study-Travel participants were personally interviewed in their home town.

Preference was given to men and women 25 to 45 years of age who had already become established in homemaking, farming, business, professions, and vocations.



The Teachers

Teachers were chosen based on what leaders need to know. KEEP’s curriculum offered a core of lessons in economics, sociology, political science, community development, and communications, communications, communications. Leaders are driven by a particular interest or issue, and the MSU campus setting gave them access to professors with specialized expertise.

The best teachers at MSU and some from UM were recruited to teach classroom seminars. State and local leaders became teachers, too, especially in the traveling seminars. KEEP seminars ran Sunday evening through Friday noon. Meals were in MSU cafeterias and participants had a “commons” at their hotel where they chewed over their lessons.

KEEP’s Goal

KEEP’s goal was to increase the capability of Montana citizens to lead and effectively participate in local, national, and international decision-making and problem solving processes. More specifically the project was designed to (1) build an understanding of the economic, social and political framework of our society, (2) provide an opportunity to use this knowledge to analyze important social problems, and (3) encourage participants to take an active role in working with people to bring about improvement in the quality of living in Montana. Understand, Analyze, Act: these are the key words. Participants were challenged to evaluate our aging and in some cases inadequate institutions, analyze alternatives and take appropriate action to facilitate change.

⁹ M. E. Quenemoen. “The Kellogg-Extension Education Project: Corn Flakes are helping to train leaders in Montana,” *Montana Business Quarterly*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, U. of Montana, Missoula, 14:4 1976, pp 28-37.

What Did KEEP Do?

The KEEP classroom was the stage for lectures and seminars. Teachers learned to expect challenging and probing questions from these students. KEEP fellows reported on various economic and social issues unique to their home communities. Travel included visits to state, national and international points of interest with emphasis on economic and community development, environmental protection, and social welfare. For example, state travel included visits to the Montana governor's office, legislature, community development organizations, the state prison, Indian reservations, cooperatives, interest groups, and small business organizations. National travel included visits to congressional offices, city governments, grain ports, coal mines, nuclear generators, copper smelters, factories, the White House, and more. International travel included visits to social, governmental, and commercial activities in several countries including Ethiopia, Yugoslavia, Japan, Taiwan, and China.

Formal Evaluations

The KEEPers who contributed "Letters to MSU President Cruzado" – all senior citizens now – said that KEEP changed and empowered them. Scientific evaluations published in 1979 gave objective measures of program impacts. Howell, Weir and Cook compared impacts of the intensive study-travel programs in California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Montana.¹⁰ A separate evaluation by Williams and Faulkner analyzed impacts only in Montana but included participants in short workshops as well as study/travel.¹¹ (Both evaluations are summarized in *Shaping Public Policy*.¹²) These formal evaluations focused on the three objectives of all the Kellogg-funded programs:

1. Increase participation in public affairs activities on the part of young men and women from rural areas who show potential for leadership.
2. Improve problem-solving and leadership skills of farmers and rural residents.
3. Expand Extension programming at land grant universities in public affairs education and leadership development.

10 Howell, Robert E., Ivan L. Weir and Annabel K. Cook. "Public Affairs Leadership Development: An Impact Assessment of Programs Conducted in California, Michigan, Montana, & Pennsylvania," Department of Rural Sociology, Washington State University, Pullman, WA, April 1979, 534pp.

11 Williams, Anne S., and Lee G. Faulkner. "The Montana Kellogg-Extension Education Project: An Evaluation," Bulletin 1213, Department of Sociology, Montana Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT, April 1979, 181 pp.

12 A summary of the evaluations is in: House, Verne W. *Shaping Public Policy: The Educator's Role*. Westridge Publishing, 1981. ch. 7.

The evaluators measured participants' activities and used sociometric methods to conclude whether changes were consequent to leadership development. Results found that all three goals were met. The first goal – increase participation in public affairs – was evaluated not just by answering the question "Did they do more?" or "Were they more active?" but by finding out whether the organizations were merely social or purposefully affecting public affairs.

Also, what did participants do? Did they hold leadership positions and were these positions local and were they migrating up the ladders of influence?

Evaluators found that KEEPers did move into leadership positions and migrated up the ladders of influence. Many began by running for Local Government Review Committees mandated by Montana's 1972 Constitution. Some became leaders in agricultural and business associations and some ran for elected offices.

Evaluation results were so encouraging that Gary King of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) asked leaders of the pilot programs to disseminate findings nationwide. Every state and territory sent delegates to Spokane in the fall of 1980 to learn about rural leadership development.¹³ Enthusiasm was high; many states organized program launches and some began programs.

Williams and Faulkner's evaluation of Montana's project measured advancement in public affairs, leadership ability, self-worth and confidence, and public affairs interest. Their data showed significant gains, both for those who completed the whole series of three week-long workshops as well as study/travel groups.¹⁴

What is Leadership?

A leader is one who brings resources to bear on a common problem. Using that definition, let's recount how KEEP came to be. Gene Quenemoen recognized a problem shared by many rural Montanans. He acted on it. His resources included his position as Extension Economist at Montana State University, knowledge of rural Montana from growing up in a small community, Bachelor and Master of Science degrees from MSU, relationships with people throughout the state, and the Extension network of agents in every county and reservation. After learning about the "young farmer leadership project" in Michigan he introduced the leadership training idea to faculty and administrative personnel at Montana State University. This led to preparation of draft proposals, discussions and finally a proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. He brought considerable resources to bear on a common problem. That's leadership.¹⁵

13 The conference was set for May until Mt St Helens blew up.
14 Ibid. See Table 1, p 83.

15 Quenemoen received the 1974 Extension Teaching Award given by the American Agricultural Economics Association.

Was KEEP Sustainable?

Should KEEP be funded in the MSU budget? As WKKF seed money ran out, Montana legislators voted meager funds for a session or two, and then none at all, despite positive evaluations and active lobbying by KEEP alumni and friends. House's last KEEP newsletter had a tombstone at the top, laying to rest a successful educational project.

Which rural leadership programs survive? Those that focused on improving communities by educating citizens generally died. KEEP was of this model. Legislatures did not take ownership of these projects. Kellogg gave seed money. The seed sprouted but did not find sustenance in the MSU budget.

Leadership development programs that focused on specific commodity groups fared better. Examples are the California Agricultural Leaders program, the Washington Agriculture & Forestry Leaders program, and the Kentucky Ag Leadership program (endowed with tobacco settlement money). The Kentucky Natural Resources Leadership Institute, funded with coal money, did not survive.¹⁶ The "public" model tried to create new programs within land grant universities. The "commodity" model gave ownership to industry and resource associations. The Kentucky program gained a large endowment from tobacco settlement monies that went to the state, and it remains a program of the University of Kentucky Extension Service.

These distinctions evolved after the 1980 national dissemination conference in Spokane. Every state and territory sent Extension educators to learn about pilot projects in Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, Montana, and Washington. The results prompted most Extension services to explore starting their own rural leaders program. Kellogg Foundation grants limited follow-up to funding state or regional conferences promoting the idea. The Kellogg Foundation funded only one more large initiative, the Palmetto Leadership Project at Clemson University. Max Lennon was president of Clemson and the Foundation Board, and he sold the need to fund a program in the South, and why not at Clemson University? The university graveyard has a stone memorial to Asbury "Frank" Lever, co-author of the Smith-Lever Act passed May 8, 1914. Lever's effort makes interesting reading and you can see a photo of his gravestone.¹⁷

¹⁶ Craig Infanger. E-mail correspondence, September 30, 2013.
¹⁷ Read a recounting of Lever's efforts. http://www.clemson.edu/extension/100/asbury_francis_lever.html

Implications for Montana

KEEP is history. Montana has changed in many ways; in general, farms got bigger, towns got smaller, roads got better, and communications got faster. Boomtown conditions blossomed with oil and gas developments in some counties. Is there still a sense of community in rural Montana? Who should carry out the mandate for Extension education? Extension programs continue but with fewer agents and fewer county offices.

Everyone who saw "Class C," a film about high school girls basketball,¹⁸ knows that the context has changed drastically in rural Montana. Arlene Olson Hendrick painted a word picture of it in her letter to President Cruzado:

"... I lived in Antelope, Montana, in the far northeastern corner ... The population of the area was very small 40 years ago. It is even smaller now. ... The little farms have gone ... The younger generation has had to leave ... The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) was good for some, but not for the family farm. ... the Bakken oil boom is good for the local economy and those fortunate enough to have mineral rights.

At the time I was with the KEEP program, there were several thriving organizations. I belonged to many of them and enjoyed my community involvement. The little town had approximately 60 people living there. There was a school with grades K-12, churches, grocery store, post office, garage, 4-H programs, scouts, Sons of Norway, and also a local bar. I wish I could say the area has continued to grow and thrive in a positive direction, but instead the schools have closed in many of the county's towns, businesses have closed, and many of the young people have left. The community spirit has changed greatly, as the communities are divided due to the closing of the schools and churches."¹⁹

Montana has changed in many ways. Leadership development, if it is to be useful, must understand the context. We have changed. Our ways of living and thinking and relating to one another have changed. But, we still are Montanans, and Montana Extension can and must continue to fill the critical role of promoting leadership in communities across the state.

VERNE HOUSE WAS DIRECTOR OF THE KEEP PROGRAM FROM 1977-1981. M.E. QUENEMOEN WAS THE FIRST DIRECTOR OF KEEP FROM 1972-1977. CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE DIRECTED TO VWHOUSE@MAC.COM AND GQUENEMOEN@GMAIL.COM.

¹⁸ "Class C: The Only Game in Town." Video production. 2008. Class C Productions.

¹⁹ Arlene Olson Hendrick. "Letters, ..." op. cit., 2013.

REAL Montana Continues a Legacy of Leadership

By *Janelle Booth*

This issue of the Montana Policy Review showcases different strategies to cultivate leadership in rural areas. Leadership development can start early through youth programs such as 4-H or FFA. The ability to lead can be fostered in older generations by offering ownership of leading local projects funded through community foundations or participating in research and study groups.

Various leadership programs have guided community actions lasting years or decades, and continue to influence citizen interaction and cooperation. To that end, a new initiative for rural adult leadership has emerged.

REAL Montana stands for Resource Education and Agriculture Leadership. It is a modern iteration of adult leadership education that builds on the legacy of the Kellogg Extension Education Program (KEEP), which was an adult leadership program that began in 1972 in Montana. The mission of REAL Montana is to “build a network of informed and engaged leaders to advance the natural resource industries in Montana.” The program involves a two-year cycle of classes, networking opportunities, and travel. Initial program development began in 2012, with the first seminar taking place in September 2013.

REAL Montana program participants discuss the role of media in shaping communication strategies of leaders in communities across the region.



Program Leadership Strategy

The premise of REAL Montana was established by examining successful adult leadership efforts across the country. There are currently similar programs in more than 40 states with the goal of developing leadership skills and networks among agricultural and rural communities. Some

programs are housed in the state’s land-grant university, while others are run through a private foundation. Most feature a format of multiple in-state seminars coupled with study trips to Washington D.C. and an international location. All share the common goal of leadership education and network building for rural participants.

Who are the future leaders of Montana? Class I consists of 20 adults representing a wide range of natural resource professions, including ranching, farming, engineering, construction, finance, sales, and the public sector. Class members were competitively selected based on their willingness and aptitude for

long-term leadership in their respective industries and communities. The program is geared towards participants who have already exhibited leadership capabilities but also have room for growth and learning. The members of Class I showcase a diverse cross section of Montana, in age, geographic location, and industry involvement.

REAL Montana is made possible through a unique public-private partnership. Each participant is responsible for a tuition fee, which covers approximately 20% of the total program cost. The program director is an employee of MSU Extension, and additional program funding is obtained through sponsorships from state- and nation-wide natural resource membership organizations and companies.

REAL Montana came into existence because of the commitment and foresight of its advisory board. The board consists of 12 leaders from a wide variety of natural resource industries, including the Montana Department of Agriculture, the Montana Farm Bureau Federation, Montana Farmers Union, the Montana Contractors’ Association, Montana Grain Growers, the MSU College of Agriculture, MSU Extension, Montana Stockgrowers, the Montana Wood Products Association, the Northern Broadcasting System, and the Treasure State Resource Industry Association. Seminar topics and locations are developed by consensus of the advisory board, and speakers and tours are based on current issues taking place in each site.

What Do Participants Say?

When asked why they enrolled in the program, class members responded:

- “I enrolled in this program because I am passionate about agriculture and its meaning and values. I want to ensure that it will remain for my children, therefore I have to be active in sustaining it.”
- “I feel I started as an unwilling leader but have come to recognize the positives to being one, for my community, family, and self. I want to be the best leader that I can.”
- “I felt the need from within myself and my industry to step up to the challenge of being a voice for the industry. We need to be at the table helping make the decisions that affect our livelihoods.”

Members of Class I completed pre-program assessments when they arrived at Seminar 1. Participants defined leadership as:

- “Leadership is the ability to be active, enthused and engaged with people in the group or organization and let them want to follow.”
- “My definition of leadership is someone who has the vision and management to get things done.”
- “Leadership is a desire to support the progress of a group, and in doing so, bring other people to that same goal.”
- “A leader is a motivator who is willing to sacrifice for the better of the group to move forward. It is a person who doesn’t need the spotlight or recognition – someone who listens more than directs.”
- “Leadership is creating an environment for success. Helping yourself and the ones around you to reach a common goal.”
- “My definition of leadership is someone who possesses the ability to lead people in a fair and organized manner. One you look to for guidance and understanding.”
- “Leadership is the ability to obtain followers....that being said, leadership for the future of agriculture needs to not assume that we have a future. We need bold, outgoing, empowering and honest people to step up.”

What lessons have been learned?

A typical seminar is three days in length, starting at noon on a Thursday and concluding at lunchtime on Saturday. Participants are involved in a mix of skill building and experiential learning activities, such as impromptu and prepared public speaking, meeting management, and conflict resolution.

The strength of the program lies in its diversity of speakers, tours, and subject matter. REAL Montana does not seek to duplicate the important work of organizations that already educate their members on specific natural resource topics. Rather, it strives to expose participants to a variety of ideas and topics that add to their well-rounded education.

At the time of this publication, Class I has participated in three seminars within Montana as well as a four-day national study tour of Washington D.C. Each seminar focused on a specific theme, ranging from the economy of crop production, to oil and gas development, to international trade issues. The first seminar featured teambuilding activities, personality assessments, and leadership lessons offered by industry experts. Subsequent seminars concentrated on the economy of crop production in northern Montana and how to navigate policy issues in our nation’s capital.

Participants underwent extensive training on working with the media, specifically on how to tell the story of natural resources in Montana while avoiding the pitfalls of sensationalized journalism. Class tours examined advances in large-scale resource industries at the Malteurop barley plant and the Calumet Montana Refining facility, then on innovations at an individual level, such as local producers finding niche markets for micro-greens and organic poultry.

What is the future of REAL Montana?

The immediate future of the program includes five remaining in-state seminars and a study tour to China in January 2015. Much like the KEEP program before it, the international experience is crucial in expanding participants’ knowledge of cultural diversity as well as trade relations.

The 20 members of Class I are set to graduate in May 2015. A new class will be selected in the spring of 2015, and the two-year cycle will start over again. The goal of REAL Montana is to have a successful legacy of several decades, much like the long-running programs in other states. As the alumni network grows with each graduating class, Montana will gain educated and empowered leaders with the ability to think broadly and lead our rural communities.

What lessons can be learned from adult leadership programs like REAL Montana? First, participants learn that effective communication is key to being a successful community leader. Knowing how to communicate with constituents or colleagues both verbally and through non-verbal methods is crucial toward building long-term support for ideas and actions.

Second, effective leaders have a vision for the future and can share that vision with individuals, even those with opposing viewpoints. Participants learn that being a visionary and being able to communicate that vision are critical steps in the leadership path. Last, leaders get things done in their community. Participants realize that their vision can become reality, even when the odds seem insurmountable. REAL Montana teaches the principles of being an effective leader; principles that participants can draw on when they encounter real obstacles that will test their leadership resolve in the future.

JANELLE BOOTH IS THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF REAL MONTANA. CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE DIRECTED TO JANELLE.BOOTH@MONTANA.EDU.



Program participants engage in a variety of field programs that involve both socializing and learning about the fundamentals of leadership.



REAL Montana program participants test leadership resolve and team-building skills in a high ropes course.



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