



# Extension News Column

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In this news column, we've been talking about pinching pennies—how to get the best deal for your hard earned money. So, how does free strike you? Today, I want to feature all the great things you can get for free from your Cooperative Extension Office.

Technically, it isn't free. As I commonly tell people, this is your tax dollars at work.

The Cooperative Extension Service is a part of the University of Alaska Fairbanks, but is part of a larger network of Extension Services from all the states in the nation. The funding for Cooperative Extension in Alaska combines funding from the state, with a portion of our funds that come from the US Department of Agriculture. In effect, this partnership between UAF, the state of Alaska, and the federal government provides individuals with the latest research based information in three major areas: home, youth, and agriculture/land resources. I am the faculty member in Health, Home, and Family Development in the Fairbanks office. Marla Lowder focuses on youth development including the 4-H program and Michele Hebert works with Agriculture and Land Resources. We have many more people that work in our office on different grants that have specific aims that you may come in contact with as well.

So what can we offer for your tax dollars? Whether you need a program for your civic group, or just a question answered, we are a quick phone call away. Let me give you some examples of what we do provide for the public.

- Pest identification. If you have a problem with bugs, pests, or other creepy critters in your home, we can help you identify them and talk about how to either eradicate them, or decide to live in harmony with them.
- Food safety and food preservation. I often field questions on whether food is safe, or should be thrown away. How do you preserve that boatload of fish that came home from Chitna, or what is the best way to hold those summer vegetables for winter consumption?
- Youth. Do you want your child involved in healthy, wholesome, educational activity? Our 4-H program is definitely all of these.
- Energy. Are you worried about how to reduce your energy consumption this upcoming winter? Either we can answer your questions, or we may refer you to the housing specialist that resides at UAF.
- Budgeting. We are all concerned about rising costs of basics. Do you have your spending under control? I work with people to get a handle on their budgeting and make smart fiscal choices.

- Food costs. We have two programs in our office that work with low-income people to help them make the most of their food resources—the Expanded Nutrition Education Program and the Alaska Nutrition Education program. There are two excellent nutrition educators that work with groups or individuals to get a handle on food expenses.
- Cost of food at home. If you are planning to move to another part of Alaska, check out the cost of food at home publications on our website. It will tell you how much it costs for the same market basket of food in places from Barrow to Ketchikan.
- Plants. This time of year we are dealing with gardening and lawns, but shortly we will have some of the same problems with house plants. The CES office will help you learn how to plant, grow, and harvest.
- Home management. Your home is the largest investment most of us will make in our lives. That's why it is important to preserve that value. So whether you have a stain in your rug, or wonder how long your washer may last, we can answer your question.
- Small business. We have a small business development person that works with our office. Her charge is to help create and strengthen small businesses. She is available for consultations on building a business, marketing, expanding, and sometimes, just re-focusing your efforts.

I know I've left out some of our services. But I hope I've piqued your interest and that you'll give us a call. Some of my favorite phone calls start with, "I wasn't sure who to call, but I always call Extension first. Either you have the answers, or can send me the right direction." Our aim is for you to feel that your tax dollars have been well spent, not frittered away on another government program that doesn't benefit you.

Give us a call at 474-2450 the next time you have a question you need answered.