

2025

Bernalillo County
Cooperative
Extension Service

Advisory Report



New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is a network of available local experts who bring relevant information, education, and research to the residents of New Mexico. NMSU Extension relays this information to residents by offering programming in the areas of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. There is an Extension Office in every county in the state of New Mexico.

The Bernalillo County Extension Office is one of NMSU's 33 "satellite" offices. There are seven full time extension agents, one program assistant, and one administrative assistant.



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Funding for the Bernalillo County Extension is provided by the USDA, NMSU, and Bernalillo County.



A Message From the County Director

Welcome to the Bernalillo County Cooperative Extension Service. I am honored to share with you, our community, the great and inspiring work the Extension Agents, staff, and volunteers continue to do.

This past year, 2025, realized changes in staff and place. The office welcomed Melissa Campos as the 4-H Agriculture Agent. The current location was purchased by the Indian Pueblo Cultural Center and our future location is starting to be realized. We are now planning for our new location. While a timeline is not known at this time, we will be including our partners in the planning process to help us design a useful space for impactful educational programming for you.

We are excited to see the 4-H youth programming work in the schools and military partnerships continually being recognized nationally. Also, the 4-H youth are active in our traditional clubs and state programs, including serving on the 4-H state leadership team. The Family Consumer Science (FCS) programs continue to excel with the Master Food Preservers, Extension Get Fit, Kitchen Creations, and much more. The FCS agents are recognized for their work and serve in leadership at the National level. The ICAN program is doing great work in the community for SNAP Education despite recent challenges with funding. The Master Gardeners are continuously busy growing abundant produce and answering the public's plant questions. The agents continue to support Bernalillo County with open space and agriculture programming.

The Agents are doing great work! I hope you will take the time to read through our accomplishments and reach out to the agents to learn more.

The office would also like to THANK the MANY volunteers who help directly or behind the scenes that enable these programs to happen and to expand the reach into the community. We greatly appreciate all the efforts and support provided to the office and agents for a successful program.

The next few pages are brief highlights of the work, education, and impacts the agents realized in 2025. I look forward to hearing new ideas as well as seeing the impacts of education and programming grow in 2026.

In gratitude,
John Garlisch



John Garlisch
with Master Gardeners

Agriculture & Horticulture



Master Gardeners

The Albuquerque Area Extension Master Gardener (AAEMG) is a program that seeks to preserve and beautify the environment while improving the quality of life in the community.

To meet that goal, AAEMG provides current research-based information that promotes horticulture best management practices, sustainability, and environmental initiatives developed by Cooperative Extension Services from New Mexico State University.

Participant Feedback

- Increase knowledge in garden topics
- Confidence when talking to the public

Master Composters

The Bernalillo County Master Composters program seeks to educate interested citizens on how to voluntarily channel organic home waste into a beneficial resource. Volunteers are trained in the science, materials and various methods of home composting. Volunteers are encouraged to teach and support Bernalillo County residents in their efforts to properly manage home waste and reduce landfill inputs.



292

MASTER GARDENERS



- 52 New Master Gardeners
- Supported 29 volunteer opportunities
- **17** classes open to the public, with an average of **50** attendees
- Answered **573** calls to the Master Gardener Hotline
- Interacted with over **7,000** Bernalillo County residents

>18,000

VOLUNTEER HOURS



1,956 POUNDS OF PRODUCE

Donated to food banks. This equates to over **7,000** servings of fruit and vegetables.

5 MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS

- Think Trees New Mexico Conference
- Ready, Set, Grow!
- New Mexico Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Albuquerque Area Extension Master Gardeners
- Bernalillo County Master Composters





Outreach Projects and Programs

- Fruit tree pruning
- Soil health
- Weed identification & management
- Plant disease and disorders
- Insect pests and beneficials
- Plant families
- Season Vegetable growing and production
- Grape vineyard management and pruning
- Hydroponics and Aquaponics
- Chemical and Pesticide safety
- Turf grass management
- Flowering Bulbs

Grow the Growers

- Beginning Farm Intern and Incubator program
- Ongoing technical support for in-class training and in-field growing



Winter Farm Business Series

8 classes on Business planning; farm financials & taxes; marketing; land access

Food Safety Training

- Tier 1 & Tier 2 training with NM Farmers Markets Association
- Produce Safety Alliance (PSA)
- Review food safety plans to help producers sell produce into schools and public institutions

Collaborative Partnerships

- Bernalillo County Open Space
- City of Albuquerque Open Space
- Santa Fe Community College
- NMSU Plant & Environmental Sciences
- NM Farmers Marketing Association
- AgriCultura
- Ciudad Soil & Water
- Center for Southwest Culture
- Indian Pueblo Cultural Center



4-H Youth Development

Youth Spotlights

After placing first in FCS Bowl at 2025 4-H State Conference, the first place team qualified to compete at the national level in 2026.

Pictured from left to right: Owen Garver, Trygg White, Allison Westfall, and Dixon Mortimer.



Bernalillo County Team 2, comprised of Ian Marquez, Savannah Tuss, Abigail McSween, and Faith Martin placed third in FCS Bowl at the state level.



Emma Hess, from the Bernalillo County Team, was overall high point individual at 2025 FCS Nationals in Consumer Decision Making



Allison Westfall (Reporter), Abby McSween (Urban Ambassador), and Savannah Tuss (Military Ambassador) were elected as 4-H State Officers

218
Youth
enrolled in
Traditional
4-H

Grant funds
awarded to
Urban 4-H in
2025
\$47,693

6,600
Youth
participating
in 4-H in
school

Adult
volunteers
assisting with
4-H
58

Program Highlights

Hydroponics

The hydroponics program brings hands-on, STEM-focused agriculture education into classrooms, allowing students to grow and care for produce while learning plant biology and nutrition. In many classrooms, the program culminates in “salad parties,” where students share their harvest. This is often their first experience tasting fresh produce they helped grow themselves. In 2025, the program engaged 1,480 youth across 50 classrooms.



Egg to Chick

The Egg to Chick Program brings hands-on agricultural learning directly into classrooms, giving students the opportunity to observe the chicken life cycle, care for living animals, and connect science, math, and reading to real-world experiences. Students incubate, candle, hatch and observe live chicks over the course of a month. In 2025, the program engaged 3,864 youth across 130 classrooms, from Pre-K through high school.

4-H Military Partnership

The 4-H Military Program at Kirtland Air Force Base provides hands-on, project-based learning and staff training to support military-connected youth navigating frequent relocations and parental deployments. In 2025, the program engaged 73 youth across multiple project days and statewide events. By offering consistent, enriching experiences in STEM, arts, leadership, and life skills, the program fosters resilience, confidence, and long-term personal growth for military-connected youth.

4-H in the Schools

The 4-H in the Schools program integrates hands-on, project-based learning into the school day, improving student engagement, attendance, and social-emotional skills. Students participate through 4-H workshops, designated 4-H time integrated into specials like PE and art, and the use of the 4-H Life Skills Wheel to support social and emotional learning. The model's success has expanded to multiple schools locally and is being replicated nationally, demonstrating its effectiveness in addressing educational inequities through experiential learning.

Youth Food Preservation Day

20 youth participants from different counties learned about canning, dehydration, fermentation, and freeze drying.

Shooting Sports

Shooting Sports had a 25% member increase in 2025.



Program Awards

- Stephani Treadwell, 4-H in the Schools at Collet Park Elementary: Western Region 4-H Volunteer of the Year
- 4-H Military Partnership: Excellence in Programming Award, State
- NAE4-HYDP Excellence in Camping Award, State and Regional
- NAE4-HYDP Excellence in Ag Literacy Programming, State



County Fair

- **>200** Youth Exhibitors
- Nearly **200** livestock entries
- **\$107,000** generated by Large and Small Animal Sale



Family & Consumer Science



Dianne Christensen is currently serving as National NEAFCS President as well as on the national Board for the Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP). In 2025 she presented at five national conferences. Her awards included Excellence in Multi-State Collaboration Award and the Human Development/Family Relationship Award. Dianne also serves as a faculty member for the statewide NM Education Designed to Generate Excellence (EDGE) curriculum which certifies Extension and County employees.

Amber Benson began her term as the NEAFCS State Affiliate President for New Mexico. She and Dianne presented on Relational Leadership at the JCEP Extension Leadership Conference. A highlight was receiving the Greenwood Frysinger Mentoring Award with Dianne and Cindy Schlenker-Davies (see above photo). Amber also won second place nationally for the Food Safety Award. In all, she was awarded a total of 11 State, Regional, and National FCS awards in 2025.



Family & Consumer Sciences Programming

Master Food Preserver

In 2025, 13 volunteers and 7 entrepreneurs were trained, expanding across 11 counties. The program provided food safety education valued at over \$169,00 in Bernalillo County in 2025.

Extension Get Fit

2025 was an impactful year with three cohorts reaching 82 residents and completing 186 sessions. The cohorts reached residents in the North and South Valley areas as well as Tijeras.

Preserving New Mexico Chile Webinar Series

This NMSU webinar series delivered culturally relevant, chile preservation education, improving food safety knowledge, confidence, and adoption of safer home practices.

Statewide Red Chile Preservation

This three part series was attended by participants from across the nation! In-person ristra classes were hosted at the NMSU Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center in October following the virtual series.

Walk With Ease

Three six week walking cohorts to county residents and underserved seniors.

Financial Wellness Book Clubs

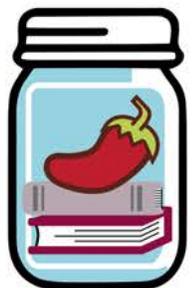
Seventy-six participants from nine counties engaged in four financial wellness book club series. Participants cited increased knowledge on how to achieve goals and be financially successful.

Keys to Embracing Aging

Two cohort participants strongly agreed the program increased their understanding of how present choices affect their future wellbeing and how healthy choices promote independence and wellbeing to live longer healthier lives.

Fermentation for the Future

A Research Study assessing how food safety practices of home consumers in New Mexico align with recommendations from USDA and NCHFP around fermentation. These insights will be shared with legislators in hopes to further food preservation funding for fermentation resources and outreach.



Extension Association

In 2025, the Bernalillo County Extension Association chapter contributed 1,149 community service hours, reaching 3,078 people. They also contributed \$118,134 in financial support of the community. Mary Lou Myers, representing Bernalillo County, won the Heart of Extension award in 2025.



FCS Program Highlights

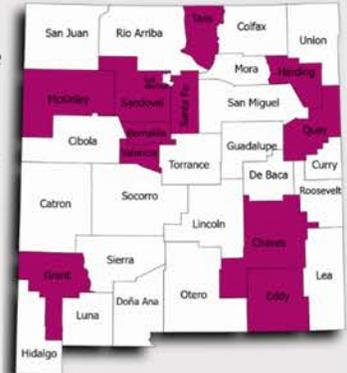
- Amber collaborated with Valencia County Agent Master Food Preserver 2024 cohort graduate and hosted the first ever Statewide Preserving Red Chile webinar series with attendees from across the country. This was a response to the 2024 Statewide Green Chile presentation.
- NMSU Global OnDemand - Amber Benson is currently developing a 10-course microlearning food preservation series with NMSU Global that is on a rolling release. The first course, "Preserve it Like a Pro!" was released Fall 2025 and "Canning Confidence" followed shortly thereafter by "Jams, Jellies and Preserves," will be released in early Spring 2026. Other courses including pressure canning, fermentation, and cold storage will be added as well.
- Amber was invited to present for the University of New Mexico's Maxwell Museum of Anthropology's Entangled Culture's fermentation exhibition October 2025, celebrating and exploring local food systems and challenges.
- FCS Health and Wellness was awarded a General Mills HomeTown Grant Making Program for programming in Bernalillo County (\$15,000)
- The FCS program maintained strong community partnerships with Roadrunner Food Bank, South Valley First Choice Community Healthcare, NMSU's Food Safety Lab, South Valley Multi Purpose Senior Center, Indian Pueblo Entrepreneurial Center, Three Sisters Kitchen, New Mexico Diabetes Advisory Council, Tijeras Senior Center, and the University of New Mexico Maxwell Museum.
- Dianne presented on the nation-wide Walk with Ease Extension collaboration for the NEAFCS Annual Session. This work was also accepted for publication in the Journal of Extension.
- Dianne presented two sessions at the National Council on Aging Conference.

13 NEW MASTER PRESERVER VOLUNTEERS

Shared food safe preservation techniques at local grower's markets and food events, while 7 Master Food Preserver Entrepreneurs utilized this training for their food business

11 NM Counties

with a trained Agent or Volunteer from the Master Food Preserver Program



>4,000 VOLUNTEER HOURS

Aside from aiding with classes, volunteers often judge at 4-H events and the New Mexico State Fair

45 HANDS ON FOOD PRESERVATION CLASSES

- Pickling
- Kombucha
- Sourdough
- Mustard and Miso
- Kimchi and Kraut
- Pressure Canning
- Water Bath Canning
- Freeze Drying
- Cheese Making
- Fermenting Flourishes
- Beginner Sausage Making
- Curing and Smoking Meat
- Dehydrating and Freezing





Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition

New Mexico State University Ideas for Cooking and Nutrition (NMSU ICAN) and New Mexico EFNEP (NM EFNEP) are Cooperative Extension Service programs with a mission to help New Mexicans reach better health outcomes and enjoy a higher quality of life by providing evidence-based nutrition education. Additionally, NMSU ICAN facilitates food distribution and community gardening projects that create system-level changes—projects that make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Bernalillo County ICAN-Ed (formerly SNAP-Ed) 2025 Impacts

Direct Education classes: 214
 Direct education reach: 3,229
 Outreach classes: 15
 Outreach reach: 275

Bernalillo County Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) 2025 Impacts

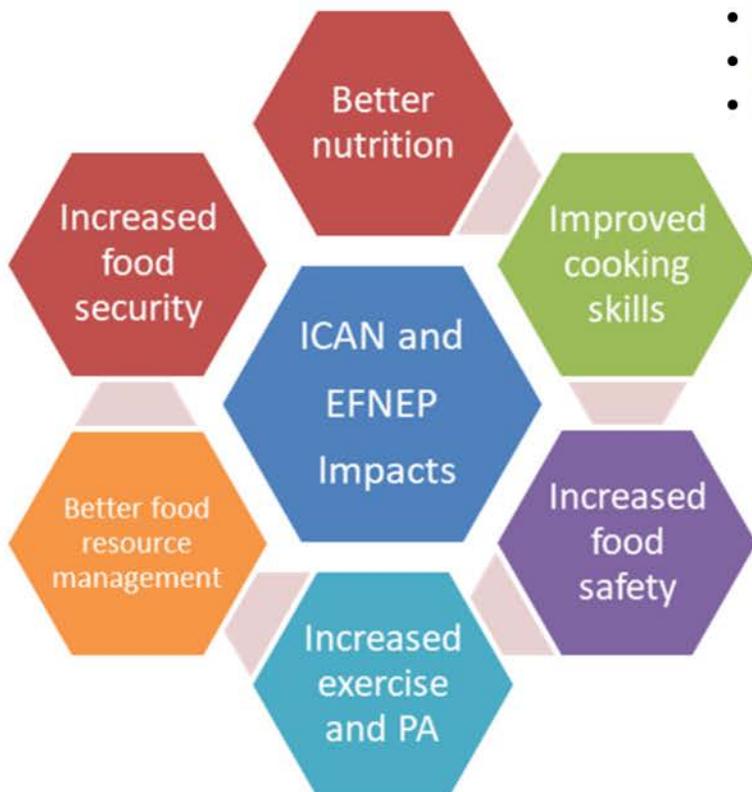
Adult Impacts:

80 families were taught and:

- 93% improved their diets
- 95% improved food resource management
- 66% increased their exercise and physical activity
- 39% improved their food safety practices

Youth impacts:

- 615 children and youth were taught in Bernalillo County, primarily in Albuquerque.
- 90% of children and youth improved their ability to choose foods in line with the Federal Dietary Recommendations.
- 56% of children and youth use safe food handling practices more often.
- 66% of children and youth improved their physical activity practices.
- 57% of children and youth improved their ability to prepare simple, nutritious, affordable food.



Vision for 2026



Horticulture

- Master Gardeners will work to collaborate with City of Albuquerque greenhouses, Farmer’s Markets, Public Libraries, Public Schools, and Demonstration Gardens
- Growing food for local food banks
- Support the public with gardening education

- Ongoing support and assistance to Bernalillo County—“Grow the Growers” farmer training program
- Organize varied programs for home gardening and horticulture
- Host statewide trainings for “On-Farm Food Safety”
- Support local farmers in the NM “Farm-to-Cafeteria” program
- Provide training on farm business and planning topics



Agriculture



4-H Youth Development

- Build 4-H Knowledge
 - Provide training and support for teachers, staff, and administrators to increase the number of schools participating in the 4-H programs in schools.
- Grow Youth Participation
 - Expand access to 4-H programs and activities for more youth, including military-connected and urban youth.
- Strengthen Partnerships and Learning
 - Work with schools, community groups, and other partners to provide meaningful, hands-on experiences that help youth develop skills, creativity, leadership, and confidence.
- To expand the scope of Small Animal Project

- Expand food systems programming
- Enhance food education at the individual, local, and regional levels
- Continue to host physical activity and nutrition classes throughout the county to promote healthy lifestyles
- Continue diabetes and pre-diabetes programs throughout the county
- Continue to host stress management and wellness classes
- Integrate Extension efforts with community-driven economic development programs to strengthen local and regional food systems
- Continue to collaborate with community partners
- Support food entrepreneurs



Family & Consumer Science



- Hire more educators
- Continue to reconnect with pre-pandemic partners and forge new partnerships
- Work to provide more education in middle and high schools
- To increase class participants and reach
- Be a part of a healthy Bernalillo County



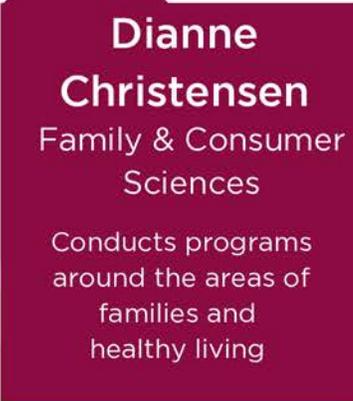
John Garlich
County Director

In addition to being the program director, assists farmers and local food systems through educational programming



Joseph Delgado
Horticulture

Coordinates programs with Master Gardeners and answers general public questions about all things horticulture



Dianne Christensen
Family & Consumer Sciences

Conducts programs around the areas of families and healthy living



Brittany Sonntag
Urban 4-H

Conducts non-traditional 4-H programs and oversees 4-H programs in the schools



Phillip Alden
4-H Family & Consumer Sciences

Conducts youth programming centered around healthy living, home economics, and leadership



Suzanne Porter-Bolton
ICAN Supervisor

Coordinates ICAN educators and conducts programming in nutrition and food resource management



Amber Benson
Family & Consumer Sciences

Conducts programs in the areas of food preservation and entrepreneurship



Melissa Campos
4-H Agriculture

Coordinates agriculture and natural resource programs for youth



Program Assistant:
Carla Jaramillo
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