Ag producers have faced many historical challenges this past year. NDSU Extension has provided resources throughout the county with information where producers can go to get help if they are dealing with mental health issues. Brochures with dealing with stress, difficult clients and where to refer individuals were mailed to all ag lenders and rural faith communities. “Wearing Out your Bootstraps” wallet cards and table tents were distributed to all rural community cafes, bars, banks and gas stations. Search NDSU Farm Stress where you will find resources available from NDSU Extension.

We have been working hard in Extension the past few months to get out as much farm and ranch stress information and resources to farmers as possible. In late November I travelled to every bank, bar, and restaurant in rural Cass County to drop off handouts and table tents to areas anywhere farmers may see them and use the information. I have also done several radio interviews in that time highlighting NDSU’s website and resources for farm and ranch stress. NDSU also has a poster board with stress information that I have set up at several sites and will continue using at talks for the rest of the winter.

The fall months were busy with end-of-season gardening calls and emails, totaling 201, mostly in October. Twenty-six gardening newspaper articles were published and read online by 40,304 viewers, who spent a total of 432 hours reading the materials according to online data collected, plus readers of the print versions of the newspapers. A website blog that I developed for posting horticultural information was visited by 3,069 viewers. After Hope-Page High School requested information about how to produce saleable bedding plants in their greenhouse for next spring, we developed a brochure describing the process, which will also be distributed to other Cass County schools for potential use in their science and agriculture education curriculums. Two educational get-togethers were held with the current Master Gardeners, and applications were screened and accepted for 20 new members to be trained this winter. Educational programs were presented to the NDSU Women’s Group and Discovery Middle School STEM students.

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- With the rapid growth of our urban area, the need for effective leaders is imperative. I have worked to foster leadership throughout our community by offering programs such as Real Colors and Generations to local groups. Participants learn how to define and describe their personal strengths, assess and recognize the strengths of others, build rapport with diverse audiences, implement effective methods of communicating with others, and recognize the different ways individuals process information. At my most recent Real Colors training with the Cass County Youth Commission, over 90% of participants agreed that the training enhanced their understanding of leadership, empowered them to feel a sense of leadership, and felt that they could apply what they learned to their school and in their communities.

Irena Gleason  
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- I completed my first two rounds of cooking classes with adults. Participants increased their confidence in planning for and preparing healthy and balanced meals on a budget with hands on practice together in the kitchen. I also worked with two classes of 5th graders who enjoyed engaging in healthy lifestyle topics such as fruit and vegetable consumption, calcium needs, and physical activity. I attended the monthly hunger coalition meetings and the 2nd Annual Health and Hunger summit, where organizations dedicated to ending hunger gather to identify ways to take collective action to improve our community.

Sarah McNaughton  
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- 4-H’ers had a busy fall with events, activities, and service learning.
- We hosted a Judging Team Showcase to build interest in Livestock, Hippology, and Crops judging teams for county 4-H’ers to compete in. Youth worked through stations, built their knowledge, and joined one or more of the three teams. These judging teams will be competing in contests around the state this spring.
- The annual Mystery Project Workshop held in November involved over 130 youth. Projects were led by the club’s teen members, and youth involved developed skills including decision making, leadership, collaboration, and creativity.

Mariam Said  
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- Last quarter, I taught Eating Smart Being Active curriculum at three different locations. Participants learned how to prepare nutritious meals with reasonable budget. They practiced budgeting by using a coupon activity. They also learned how to include more fruits and vegetables into their diet. One participant shared that her children ask to try different vegetables and kids are now participating meal preparations. Participants learned how to handle foods safely by cooking the right temperature and refrigerating the leftovers. I also taught On The Move Junior curriculum to second graders. Kids did well by tracking all five foods groups daily. Second graders had the opportunity to prepare smoothies and they liked the hands-on activity.