• My name is Irena Gleason and I am the new Cass County Family Nutrition Program (FNP) Extension Agent. I graduated from North Dakota State University (NDSU) with a bachelors’ degree in Health Education and I recently added a teaching license in Biology Education. Prior to joining Extension, I worked for Devils Lake Public Schools as a high school Biology teacher and Grand Forks Public Schools as a long-term substitute teacher in both Adaptive Physical Education and teaching English as a second language. As an FNP agent, I am most excited for the opportunity to work with diverse audiences. It is a joy to be in a position where my passion and values in health and wellness will be championed and provide incredible connections for outreach in the county.

Irena Gleason
Extension Agent Family Nutrition Program
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• With summer wrapping up so does this year’s crops season. This growing season has had some tough conditions. The late planting season due to the cold and wetness delayed farmers planting and because of the flooding, many fields were unable to be planted. Fargo received nearly 19 inches of rain, which was almost three more inches of rain than last summer. Harvest has been going slow as result of the frequent rain and the slowly maturing crops. Wheat harvest is almost complete now and soybean harvest had just started in some areas before the last round of rain.

Kyle Aasand
Extension Agent Agriculture and Natural Resources
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• The summer brought variety to my position from answering canning questions to coaching the two consumer decision making teams to presenting at the statewide school foodservice workers and women’s business leadership conference. Eight youth gained decision making skills and used these skills at the state judging event with the junior team placing 1st and the senior team placing 3rd. Twenty-two women in the leadership program participated in Real Colors. Real Colors help individuals identify their own temperament and those they work with. It provides a new and better understanding of learning, teaching and communication styles. From the information they learn, individuals are able to have more effective interactions with others.

Rita Ussatis
Extension Agent Family and Community Wellness
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• My first three full-time months were filled with activity. I attended the weeklong new staff orientation on the NDSU campus. I received and answered 619 garden-related phone calls and emails, and conducted 23 on-site home visits. I conducted 13 weekly WDAY Lawn and Garden Radio half-hour programs, and wrote 26 gardening columns for Forum Communications on which 43,170 online readers spent 480 hours reading, according to Forum statistics, plus newsprint readers. I presented fall garden preparation programs in West Fargo, Fargo, and Grand Forks, by invitation, and a pollinator program to the Cass-Clay Food Initiative. I coordinated our volunteer Master Gardeners in planning Garden Palooza, our new, all-day public gardening event to be held Sat. April 25, 2020. I’m delighted to be a new member of the Cass County Extension team.

Don Kinzler
Extension Agent Agriculture and Natural Resources – Horticulture
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• The Parenting News newsletter was sent out to over 3,000 recipients with news of upcomings parent education classes this fall.

• Four Parent Education class series are being held this fall: Active Parenting for Teens – Six 2 hour sessions, Active Parenting for 5-12 year olds – Six 2 hour sessions, Love & Logic – Three 2 hour sessions, and Love & Logic – Five 1.5 hour sessions

• Planning is underway for hosting both a parent night and professional workshop with nationally known speaker, Erin Walsh in November. She will focus on the latest discoveries in brain science and the emerging challenges and opportunities related to “growing up digital.”

• Last quarter, I taught Eating Smart Being Active curriculum to participants from three locations. The participants have learned different cooking and meal preparation techniques. They also learned how to understand nutrition labels and choose foods which are low in sodium and fat. In class, participants studied how to save money while shopping for groceries. One participant shared that September was the first month that she was able to stretch her grocery money to the end of the month. Another participant told me that by taking this class, she learned how to change her eating habits and find ways to get more nutrients into her body. Also, class participants talked about that they became more physically active.

• Fall means the start of the new 4-H year, new members, new leaders, and new ways for youth to learn.

• Twenty youth and their families participated in the Achievement Days horse show, where they had the opportunity to work one-on-one with professionals in the equine industry. 4-H’ers learned sportsmanship, collaborated with their peers, and improved their horsemanship skills.

• All members and leaders worked through their 4-H year in their year-end record books. Through record keeping they learn the importance of record retention, and showcase their community service, and utilize leadership development.

• This year’s Agriculture Adventure Day drew 1,342 youth and their families in spite of the rainy weather to learn about Agriculture. Today roughly 1.5% of Americans live on a farm. As we move from agricultural settings to urban settings, we become increasingly disconnected from our food supply. This disconnect leads to individuals not knowing where their food comes from and a misunderstanding of modern agricultural practices. Agriculture Adventure Day is designed to educate youth and their families on modern agriculture practice through interactive activities, and empower participants with knowledge and an understanding of North Dakota food production and local food systems.

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