

Herbel, Loretta

Subject: FW: I would like to submit my written support for the NDSU Extension Service Program

I would like to submit my written support for the NDSU Extension Service Program:

There is a huge disparity between the rural and the urban in the state of North Dakota. This is not news. The state's major economic boon is, and always will be, largely based in agriculture. This is not news. Knowledge is power. This is not news.

I grew up in Crystal, North Dakota (Google it. Population of 131 people. Seems like an exaggeration.) I've traveled around the world. You know where I live now? Crystal, North Dakota. You may not be able to understand the life I've got, but that is ok. It is every bit my choice.

The rural to urban gap is not in a financial, educational, or even political difference, the disparity is in understanding why we do it and what resources we need to thrive.

As a rural person, I need the rest of the state to understand that you need us. You need us, and you need us at our strongest as it benefits every other sector out there.

I am 33 years old. There is not an agency I have utilized in the county, area, state, more than the Extension Service. One of the greatest resources we have in our rural communities is our NDSU Extension Service family. I know them by name — Walsh County and Pembina County, past and present — Randy Melaas, Lesley Lubenow, Lynette Flage, Helen Schill, Kari Helgoe, Sue Fagerholt, Jamie Medbery, Tara Sondeland, Brad Brummond, Samantha Lahman.

I was a Cloverbud in the 4-H program when I was first introduced to the office. I went on to prosper in the events that Pembina County had to offer. I was introduced to making smart consumer choices, developing important public speaking skills, committing to a project and following through on developing an exhibit (far too many exhibits if you ask my mother) for the county fair.

The youth programming went beyond ribbons and fairs. They were preparing us in a greater understanding for what it means to be leaders from parliamentary procedure to speaking for what is right. They were preparing us for what it means to be ambassadors for our state.

Following my eligible 4-H days, I returned to the office in Pembina County as the summer help for the county fair. There never was a slow day for the agents in charge. There were countless questions including everything from weed identification to plant zones, canning procedures and community involvement . . . and that doesn't even include the ag related requests.

For those who think you can replace the knowledge of a person with the magic of Google, look back to that population number . . . you can't trust everything you read on the Internet. The site is only as good as the source. I prefer my information to be research-based and unbiased, not simply because Jenny with the mom-blog says, "It's all good."

Not only is the source, as in the person, important to consider, but also the source, as in the location vital to the success of each individual county.

Most recently, I was a graduate of the 2017 class of Walsh/Pembina county Annie's Project program. Following college I returned to the farm. I ended up getting a job in Grand Forks, but when I got married, we decided that what we wanted was the rural life. We moved back to Crystal and eventually became partners in the family farm.

Through Annie's Project I was able to gain both knowledge and connections specific to our area, which would improve my experiences as a farmer and a farm wife. We discussed the basics of commodity marketing; available resources to our farm through the likes of FSA, NRCS, and more; and the best way to care for our families through investing and planning for the future — including the inevitable succession discussion.

It's not all 4-H and agriculture. Extension is gardening and parenting and healthy habits, economics, stronger communities, and so much more.

Running a tractor is easy. Being a farmer is hard. President Eisenhower once said, "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field."

The NDSU Extension Office of Pembina County is around 300 miles from Bismarck, but I can tell you, we need them at full strength. Drastic cuts that take down one of our strongest assets is news. The stronger we are as farmers, as rural communities, as proud citizens of North Dakota, all the better for our future as a state. Their knowledge is our power.

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