January 8, 2018

SBARE
NDSU
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Re: Letter of Support for NDSU Extension Service, Family and Community Wellness

Dear SBARE Members,

I wanted to take a few minutes to share with you the important role that NDSU Extension Service’s Family and Community Wellness Agent plays in Dunn County.

Once predominately an agriculture based economy, Dunn County now ranks consistently as one of the top oil and gas producing counties in the State of North Dakota. This broadening of our economic base has allowed people to return to the family farm and the community of their youth while encouraging others, seeking new opportunities, to join our community. Janet Wanek, Dunn County’s Family Community Wellness Agent has become a valuable member of the county leadership team as we work in partnership to maintain a sense of place as the county grows and our community diversifies.

Dunn County NDSU Extension Service has partnered with the Dunn County Jobs Development Authority to bring classes and programs into our area that would not otherwise have been available. In every case, our NDSU Agent provided expertise and programing and the JDA provided sponsorship support and sometimes scholarships to attend the NDSU programs that were offered.

The classes and educational opportunities that Wanek brings to our community span generations. Students benefit from cooking and healthy lifestyle classes and supplemental robotics classes in our school systems. 4-H Youth programs provide our youth the opportunity to explore and develop their personal interests and leadership skills. Young entrepreneurs learn basic child care skills in preparation for opening their own businesses. Farm to Fork wine making classes challenge adults to think about processing local produce and encourage social engagement in the community. Seniors are encouraged to evaluate their insurance options. Computer classes and smart device forums offer the opportunity for seniors to learn how to use their devices to provide answers to every day questions, beyond how to make a call.
Dunn County’s FCW Agent played an important role in reimagining the Dunn County Food Pantry. Janet was quick to identify that the Food Pantry did not have the volunteer or networking capacity that would serve the growing community. Utilizing her connections within the Extension Service and community she located an organization that agreed to assume fiscal sponsorship. With sponsorship, the volunteer base grew, the shelves filled and for the first time in its history, the Dunn County Food Pantry had standard operating hours. Our agent continues to provide limited support to ensure sustainability of the facility, but much of the work is now done by a dedicated volunteer base. What was once a struggling food closet filled with random donations is now a well-stocked pantry and a key distribution point for wellness information and access to community integration.

Our ruralness, while an important distinctive value, has its disadvantages. Dunn County’s FCW Agent is often the only contact that many of our neighbors have to engaging, educational opportunities that the public-school system or other agencies cannot provide. Through all the programs and all the classes, our NDSU Family and Consumer Wellness Agent consistently reminds us that healthy lifestyles and continuing education are an essential part of our agricultural values and critical to our community success.

I thank you for support of NDSU Family and Community Wellness Programs in the past and I encourage you to continue your support of this vital piece of community development.

Sincerely,

Carie Boster
Director
Dunn County Jobs Development Authority