BUILDING BUSINESSES: UI Extension’s food processing education aids dairy industry

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IN THE 10 YEARS since Jeff Kronenberg initiated his UI Extension food processing efforts in southern Idaho, he has brought educational, technical, and research services to Idaho’s food processing industries—currently the largest sub-sector of Idaho’s manufacturing complex.

After initially focusing on food safety, Kronenberg and the multi-university TechHelp partnership he serves expanded into lean manufacturing and artisan cheese making. Recently, he launched a new initiative to strengthen outreach in industrial dairy processing, with five workshops already under his belt and three more slated for spring.

Workshops. Altogether 168 participants employed by at least eight Idaho dairy processors were attracted to the first five workshops in whey processing, industrial cheese making, pasteurization, dairy Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP), and evaporating and drying, which were taught by some of the nation’s foremost experts. At Glanbia USA in Twin Falls, human resources vice president Shawn Athay called the workshops “very beneficial” to the firm’s workforce development efforts.

Milk/Cheese. With Idaho currently third in the nation in both milk production and cheese processing, Kronenberg says improvements in efficiency and vigilance in food safety are key to continued competitiveness. Industry representatives told him they “want local training—not in Wisconsin, California, or Utah—and they want it targeted to their plant operations personnel.”

“We make huge volumes of cheddar cheese, whey, and milk powder in Idaho, and there are basic manufacturing concepts that are critical for new and existing employees,” says Kronenberg, WSU/UI School of Food Science. “The processors want to make sure their operators are getting top quality training, and that’s what we’re doing.”

$49.8M impact. The UI Extension food processing program extends beyond public workshops and short courses to specialized in-house trainings and on-site technical assistance with firms making everything from appetizers to salad dressings. Surveys commissioned by the National Institute of Standards and Technology—with which TechHelp is affiliated—show that Kronenberg has made a $49.8 million difference to participating firms in increased sales, reduced costs, and six other measured impacts since 2005.

2 Degrees NW helps rural Idaho artists

LEARN MORE at http://www.2dnw.org/

“It’s REALLY HARD FOR ARTISTS,” says UI Extension’s Lorie Higgins, Moscow, which is why she founded 2 Degrees Northwest. “They run themselves ragged going to all the shows, farmers markets, trying to make product, market it, sell it.” Yet arts are ways rural residents can both support themselves and provide a tourist draw to their communities.

A UI Extension grant in 2007 helped Higgins launch the cooperative that helps artists in small rural Idaho communities located between 45° and 47° latitude—some 30 small towns from Riggins north to Worley on the Coeur d’Alene Indian Reservation.

In April, 2 Degrees Northwest’s store at 210 S. Main St., Moscow will celebrate its first year. Open 2 to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, it is run by volunteers from among 50 artists who make and sell hand-tied fishing lures, jewelry, paintings, soaps, candles, and foodstuffs. The store doubles as a workshop, pairing UI, Washington State University, and Lewis & Clark State College students with artists to learn how to market, package, write business plans, and try e-commerce. Plumbers and other smalltown entrepreneurs are welcome, too. Soon you can buy artisan goods online from their Web site.

CALDWELL

University of Idaho’s Caldwell Research and Extension Center

CALDWELL AT A GLANCE:
• Established 1906; moved ’06
• 5.55 acres at $605,000 value
• Infrastructure value: $2.1M
• Equipment value: $180,000
• Staff: 9 faculty, professional staff/3 support staff

As the University of Idaho’s oldest off-campus center, the Caldwell Research and Extension Center has been in continuous operation since 1906. It moved to its current downtown location from 320 acres south of Caldwell in 2006. Over the years, it has responded to changing Treasure Valley agricultural needs, first in crops and irrigation, then in dairy, swine, beef, and sheep.

The UI’s Caldwell Business and Technology Incubator and its Food Technology Center opened in 2000 and 2002, respectively.

Head of UI Extension’s recently consolidated Southern District is at the center, along with 8 faculty and professional staff engaged in research, extension, and teaching activities in dairy and beef production, food science, range economics, 4-H youth development, and business development.

more on Caldwell on back page
**Caldwell’s Food Tech Center helps start-ups go national**

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AT THE UI’S CALDWELL FOOD TECHNOLOGY CENTER, director Drew Dalgetty says the pilot plant is “going gangbusters” with Good Laboratory Practices (GLP) residue studies—assessments that ensure that agrichemicals meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards and that producers retain access to cost-effective crop-protection products. Altogether 29 GLP studies are being sponsored by 13 agrichemical companies in 10 different crops, including apples, barley, grapes, plums, potatoes, strawberries, and tomatoes.

In the center’s commercial kitchen, entrepreneurs like Chris Florence and Chance Morgan of Sweet Valley Organics jump start their businesses in a certified, state-of-the-art facility that lets users safely process and efficiently package and label their products. Says Florence: “The center has been invaluable in helping us develop our products. We really had no other options starting out.”

Start-ups benefiting from the kitchen span from Sandpoint to Montpelier; several—like Prosperity Organic Foods, Treasure Valley Salsa, and Extravagonzo Foods—are going, or have already gone, national.

**EXPLORE CALS WEBS**

http://www.2dnw.org/

“WE BELIEVE THE ARTS AND HAND-MADE GOODS ARE CENTRAL TO A STRONG AND VIBRANT PLACE-BASED RURAL ECONOMY,” READS THE MISSION OF THIS INNOVATIVE EFFORT TO HELP RURAL ECONOMIES. COMING SOON: CRAFTS FOR SALE ONLINE.

**UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO CALDWELL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**

THE THREE-BUILDING CALDWELL COMPLEX includes office and state-of-the-art videoconference/classroom space, flexible business incubator space, and a licensed food-processing facility.

**The Caldwell Business and Technology Incubator** supports locally owned enterprises by providing incubator bays, delivering continuing education, assisting with on- and off-farm direct-marketing channels, and offering processing, technical, succession, and management development services.

**A new winery incubator** allows space for three winemakers and Treasure Valley Community College viticulture instruction.

**The Food Technology Center**, in addition to office space, includes a pilot processing plant where food and agrichemical companies can conduct or contract R&D; a certified commercial kitchen where small companies produce, process, package, and label specialty foods; wet processing capacity; and cold storage.

**MAJOR PROGRAMS**

This is headquarters for UI Extension Southern District’s 18 counties and 34 UI Extension educators who deliver research-based knowledge to southern Idahoans of all ages. Also:

**Dairy**: Reproductive efficiency and artificial insemination; milk quality, mastitis, and production; mastitis and other diseases; risk management; Spanish-language and international refugee dairy-worker training.

**Beef**: Beef Quality Assurance; sire selection and feed efficiency; trace minerals **Range economics**: western rangeland and ranching community sustainability; western ranch economic modeling; sage land restoration; grazing policy.

**4-H youth development**: Outreach to diverse audiences through after-school and youth development programs, including science, technology, engineering, and math.

**Food science**: Technical on- and off-site assistance to small food processors; nutritional and ingredient label development; Good Laboratory Practices food-processing studies for agrichemical residues; contract research for medium- to large-scale food processors; wine quality testing.

**Business development**: Continuing business and technical education for pre-venture and entrepreneurial businesses; local food network development; wine incubation; agribusiness recruitment, retention, and expansion; value-added agriculture.

**COLLABORATORS**

Many federal, state, and private agencies cooperate with and count on help from staff here, including— **State/Federal** land-management agencies; Idaho departments of Agriculture, Lands, Health and Welfare, Fish and Game. Also: Caldwell Economic Development Council; Idaho Cattle Assn.; Idaho Dairymen’s Assn.; Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission; Idaho Woolgrowers Assn; International Rescue Committee; Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; Rural Roots; Sage-STEP; TechHelp Idaho; The Nature Conservancy; United Dairymen of Idaho; private industry.

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