Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I am Judy Simpson. Today on the program it's a quarterly chat with the dean of the university of Vermont extension. The visit with Doug Lantagne a few times every year it's an opportunity to learn about new UVM extension programs that benefit Vermonter and about other educational opportunities that UVM extension offers all across state. Doug is a native of Newport any UVM graduate he joined extension in 1999 and was appointed to the top spot in 2006. It's great to see you again.

Doug.: It's great to be here Judy.

Judy.: You with us last in February. What if you've been working on since?

Doug.: I am the chairperson for the national board of directors for the cooperative extension system. I have been working a lot nationally in the last couple of months around some of the funding issues too secure funding for cooperative extension nationally as well as in this state. Our congressional delegation has been very supportive because they understand how extension works of the local level to solve problems and that all sums up to solving national issues. It's been a great experience working nationally but also focusing on how that impacts the state positively as well.

Judy.: Excellent. It's certainly been a crazy spring particularly the flooding that we've had the spring is also a time for renewal in discovery. Recently on across the fence we discovered what it's like for kids in the UVM extension four H forensics program to discover something new.

Meet Winooski's youngest detectives...
Jarel Sinclair/Forensics Student: “When we did all the calculations we needed to do with the calculator, I found out the person was 5.5.”
Bradley Senna/ Forensics Student: “.. if the bones placements are different sometimes, if you like dig them up or something, if they're in different places, you can tell like uh, that the killer probably killed them over here and probably brought them or something.”

Barbara Russ/ 21st Century Grant Director – Winooski: “I was contacted by the 4h program who was interested in having some of their 4h educators work at our school in our afterschool program... and this was a program that kids had expressed an interest about, and so when i told them that we were going to be able to do this, they signed up and are now saying that they would like to continue.”

Jarel: “Right now we're just analyzing different bones from turkeys, humans, little baby bones and stuff.”

Bradley: ”We're working with ribs, we just worked with eula, and this is a uh, part to the leg... we were measuring ... how tall they were and stuff, to see if they go to the same person, and we found out that they do go to the same person cause they're all 5.5.”

Jarel: “It's really fun... everything we've done so far is fun - we've done the fingerprinting that they're doing over there, we've done blood drops, we've done bugs”

Bradley: “I think its like one of my favorite classes, its like the only classes i really like... it's just fun and you get to learn a lot of other stuff.”

Leblanc: “They watch all the shows and it’s kind of weird, because real forensics is a lot different, so i think that this way they get to learn what the differences are and how challenging it is to pull fingerprints and that kind of thing, and how you actually calculate the bones, it’s not some 3-dimensional spinning image that magically appears, you know, it’s really challenging, it’s real science.”

Its real science and real learning, and these kids wouldn’t have it any other way.

Bradley: “I've watched a lot of TV shows about this and this is like the thing i love the most. I've always wanted to be a forensics detective.”

Judy.: They had a lot of fun and I had the chance to speak to some of the kids that were in that forensics class and they loved it they were really well spoken and articulate and I even got a nice thank you note.
Doug.: That's great number one size education is critically important and even nationally we have slipped over the last few decades so four H is dedicated at bringing a science in an interesting way back to kids. So well rounded well-spoken and well educated children are our future and that's what four age works on. It's great to see programs like that with the kids are the confirmation that it's a great program.

Judy.: And they did say that they said boy this is not like any science class I've ever been to. I like science now.

Doug.: Yes.

Judy.: This particular 4H forensics program was offered as an after school program. Is it for each expanding its after school programming?

Doug.: Yes we are still staying with our club programs but we need to be where the kids are. We are an organization that uses experIENTial learning which is hands on learning. Whether you're building a robot doing a forensics class measuring a bone with the are building a rocket or you're making an action exhibit for some display its hands on and the kids tend to like it they learn a lot and you also need those caring adults those teachers that are there each and every day providing some guidance and mentorship to those youth.

Judy.: As you mentioned is not just the children in the extension four age were getting a new educational opportunity. 4H is offering science curriculum training two Vermont’s public school teachers and home schooling parents.

Along with demonstrating how 4-H’s science curriculum can enliven even the stuffiest science lesson these 4-H educators are also trying to change people’s perception of 4-H.

Lauren Traister/4-H Educator: 4-H is a tremendous resource in all communities in Vermont and across the country and many people don’t think of us as a resource in science, again because they’re stuck in this old concept that 4-H is an agricultural program. We’re really hoping that people will understand that 4-H is a resource for schools and afterschools and home-schoolers to reach out and partner with us and that we really can help them advance their mission of quality science and we can then ultimately we all have the same goal of improving our youth science abilities it’s a win win all the way around.
Mike Ducharme/Para-Educator Barre Technical Center: I guess my correlation with what 4-H brought to kids or what kids brought to 4-H was through animal training or dairy products or just farming in general. There’s a much more broad diverse focus here and it brings in a much larger group of individuals.

Higgins: We can all use more resources so just to be able to tap into this huge library that they have which I never knew anything about. I mean you can Google anything, but that doesn’t make it good information and so by having something that’s put together by an organization like this that’s accredited and you know taps into science standards and that kind of stuff is useful, but it really just helps to add to the library.

Judy.: It seems like the UVM extension 4H program is filling a real need when it comes to additional training for teachers and also have people who home-schoolers children I hadn’t even thought of that.

Doug.: Four H only exists because of caring and knowledgeable adults. Whether their teachers in schools or home school parents or just volunteers that are willing to share their passion. If we have a great library of great materials that will allow kids to learn the best thing we can do is get as many adults as possible involved in four H because that will lead to kids being excited about what they do.

Judy.: If we also heard one of the women say in that particular piece that four H the gentleman actually that 4-H was perceived as agricultural but there’s so much more.

Doug.: Yes there is there’s a whole lot more but we always live on our historical past because when I was young I did this. When you’re young you did something and you remember that but societal needs change over time and extension and four H program continues to change and look for what is relevant now with the youth of today so the youth of today at 20 or 30 years from now will say extensive news today that with us in 4-H how come they don't do that anymore? Hopefully we are meeting a current need and still not forgetting our past but not being locked into it as that’s the only way we can do it through animal clubs or other ways.

Judy.: So it's really a constant evolution?

Doug.: A constant evolution and that’s extension generally in our four H program we have to keep that in mind as well.
Judy.: That's great. Switching gears a little bit local food continues to be a major emphasis across Vermont. The interest is growing to other parts of the country too. In a recent across the fence program we learn how the work of an extension specialist is adding two Vermont's menu of locally grown food.

Heather.: The bakers and the localvore is in the farmers are getting together is and listening to each other trying to figure out OK how can we create a better quality product for the end user and the user is saying OK how can we deal with some of the inconsistencies how can we change our recipes are or how can we work with what we're getting.

Today after many trials the red hen baking company is producing three varieties of bread made from 100% locally grown ingredients as the home including the bread named after the renowned wheat breeder in Charlotte Vermont’s own Cyrus Pringle.

Randy.: It is like we see with so many things and so many other foods in Vermont we may not grow things that look exactly what we see and other grocery stores in any other part of the country. I don't really feel like our holy grail needs to get it like the Midwest. We need to be working together as farmers and bakers to come up with something that is unique to Vermont. If you're standing here five years ago and asked me do you think there's ever going to be a time you make Vermont 100% I would've given you a whole list of reasons why that's next to impossible. So it's really remarkable that we're in this position.

Heather.: I think that's a New England farmer trait when someone says you can't you try you definitely prove them wrong. I was a little bit skeptical myself but I knew our farmers work with the kids and work the hardest they could to get the quality wheat that Randy needed to bake bread.

Judy.: Here in the studio home with the dean at UVM extension Doug Lantagne. What kind of emphasis overall is extension pudding on growing food?

Doug.: Extension is pudding a tremendous amount of energy in that arena. From a complete systems view you may have heard the Food System spire at the University of Vermont and the whole institution is looking at how to better integrate the science of the psychology and the medical and the agricultural together about what makes our Food System and what would make our Food System healthier and better for us. On the other side of that we're hoping farmers look at new crops as we saw the wheat. We used to be the breadbasket of New England or the wheat basket of New England here in Vermont but as it became more commercial we moved out west but with heathers leadership she has shown that you can still grow wheat here you can work with bakers and you can produce a crop
that farmers have not produced in large amount and add that to your list of profitable crops. She's also working with hops and also working with barley this spring because local brewers would like to source some of those materials locally. That if the land is profitable if you can grow something then we're going to keep our open landscape. All of those things are working energy because again as a system. We don't expect to produce all the food we need within the borders of the state of Vermont or with a New England but it doesn't hurt our economy and all it actually helps our economy if the produce a little bit more food locally then we eat locally. Those dollars flow through the system and extension is very very dedicated and working hard across the state and supporting farmers to grow that food and encouraging folks to buy that food locally.

Judy.: Anyone will tell you it's not hard to convince someone to buy local food once they have tasted it.

Doug.: That's correct its very good. Something fresh is always better than something two months old or a month old.

Judy.: Absolutely of course we can't have agriculture without the land. As viewers have learned here on across the fence there is an effort underway to preserve Vermont's working landscape. Leading the effort is a former state agricultural secretary and the Vermont council on rural development.

Paul.: We've lost dairy farms every year for the last 19 years. We've lost about 650 to 700 in the last 10 years more than a third of the dairy farms in the state. Home they've been the traditional anchor. We've lost about 40% of milk capacity on the forest product side 43% in the last 10 years of mills in Vermont have got a business. Meanwhile we love the working land and we love the open landscape and it’s so fundamental to us. How do we look at what it's going to take a new generation of folks working on the land to take advantage of the entrepreneurial opportunities that are out there right now and to build an economy that supports the kind of activities on the land that Vermonters care so much about.

Roger.: Vermont is in a perfect location to be a leader because we have markets around us we have the entrepreneurial skills of people who want to do new things but it takes capital it takes leadership and it takes coordination among all groups business leaders gov't leaders and administration going forward.
Judy.: And UVM extension is one of the partners in the working landscape partnership Doug that's very important.

Doug.: It is just as I was saying land is profitable land for being able to make a profit off your land is critical to having a working landscape. If land to produce a good income then it becomes valuable. If it becomes valuable it is not sold off for other uses that we may prefer not to see. UVM extension as I already said working with energy crops working with specialty crops working with diversifying the land base so farmers can make a better living all contribute to a working landscape.

Judy.: We're almost out of time but I do want to touch on the four H operation military kids program. Very important.

Doug.: It is very important. We work with the family's getting ready for the soldiers to leave. We work with the family as well as soldiers are serving their country. And we continue to work with soldiers and their family's now that they're back because engaging in a family can be stressful after year apart. Everyone grows and then you'll have to regrow back together. We're just providing support as best we can.

Judy.: Doug thank you so much. If you have any questions or comments for the dean of UVM extension he would appreciate hearing from you you can reach him at the UVM extension state office using the toll free number on your screen and you can also learn more about extension by visiting the web site. Doug thank you.

Doug.: Thank you.

Judy.: That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the fence.

Across the fence is brought to you as a public service by the University of Vermont extension and WCAX TV