



History of the Montana Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences (MEAFCS)

Home Demonstration agents in Montana, as they were originally called at the county level, date back to 1917. Katherine Jensen was secured as a home economics specialist at a salary of \$1,800 paid largely from the Smith-Lever Funds. Miss Jensen was a graduate of North Dakota State College, with a master's degree from the University of Illinois.

In 1917, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service selected Janette Kelley as a Stillwater County "home demonstration agent," sharing the results of government-sponsored home economics research from Wheat Basin to Park City. By 1921, Kelley had been hired by Minneapolis's Washburn Crosby Company, now known as General Mills, and set to work establishing the company's first test kitchens.

When consumers subsequently flooded the company with baking questions, a signature was created to personalize responses from Kelly and what would grow to be her staff of 50 women. The chosen name honored retired company director William G. Crocker. The first name Betty was selected simply because it sounded friendliest. So, with the stroke of a pen, Janette Kelley became Betty Crocker.

In 1919 there were 15 agents and 2 state leaders in the state. By 1926 there were 152 Home Demonstration Clubs, and the number tripled by 1928.

The Home Demonstration Agents Association of Montana was organized in 1929. All members were initiated in a ceremony called *Shu-Tan-Ka* which means "to council together." Frances Smith Patten was the first president. The objective of the organization was to sponsor all professional and social activities of the Montana Home Demonstration Agents. Dues were \$1.00. Issues of concern included:

- 1) Salaries, to whom should the salary raise be suggested? 2) How to determine salary based on ability to keep the agent at the salary she is willing to take or on her training and experience? The Federal Government recommended no lower than \$1,800 while Montana's minimum was \$2,100.

Shu-Tan-Ka, a monthly publication, was designed as means for sharing ideas, expressing opinions, and keeping in touch with current and former members. Agents rotated alphabetically as editor. The newsletter was published until 1970.

In 1938, twelve agents reached 13,193 women and girls enrolled in Home Economics Extension and 5,954 non-club members.

The Home Demonstration Agents Association of Montana affiliated with National Association of Extension Home Economics became the Montana Association of Extension Home Economists in 1965. Later the name was changed to Montana Extension Association for Family and Consumer Sciences. In 1983 the Association allowed state specialists to join. The Montana Association began selecting agents to receive the Distinguished Service Award in 1945.

In 1983 a scholarship fund was initiated by the Montana Association of Extension Home Economists. The scholarship is to be used for continuing education such as a) educational credits toward a Masters degree or Ph.D. program; b) participation at a national meeting of an occupational related professional association; c) summer school course work at any university; d) an internship with business or other Extension Service.

In 1983, Montana had 32 Home Economists as field staff and nine State Human Resource staff. In 2009 there are 24 Family & Consumer Science agents and five State Specialists.