When University of Arizona Cooperative Extension set about its mission a century ago, educators traveled the state by train, sharing exhibits of livestock, produce and the latest in farm machinery, plus advice for more efficiently managing one’s household.

The Extension Train—packed with hogs, cattle, sheep, plows, fruits and vegetables—was a traveling classroom, bringing knowledge to the people of the brand new state of Arizona.

That mission remains strong today, as Cooperative Extension celebrates 100 years of improving the lives of Arizonans—through innovative research and vital educational programs. The delivery of information and science, however, looks a bit different.

While Extension agents, specialists, staff and volunteers continue to share knowledge in classrooms and homes, on fields and farms, technology allows Cooperative Extension to connect with people, through news you can use on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Pinterest and mobile apps.

As Extension enters its second century, there’s a continuing opportunity to identify Arizona’s greatest challenges and offer solutions, said Jeff Silverttooth, director of Arizona Cooperative Extension and Associate Dean for Economic Development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences—or CALS.

“Improving lives, communities and the economy—it’s what we have done for 100 years and what we will continue to do for the next 100 years,” said Linda Houkooper, Associate Director of Programs for UA Cooperative Extension.

The signing of the Smith-Lever Act on May 8, 1914 by the U.S. Congress established the Cooperative Extension Service as a national priority, creating a unique educational partnership between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the nation’s land-grant universities that extend research-based knowledge through a state-by-state network of extension educators.

When what was then the Arizona Cooperative Extension Service was established formally at Arizona’s land-grant institution—the UA—on July 1, 1914, it had one full-time employee and work was already under way in every county in the state. But even before this Congressional action, many states were already using the Extension model of using research to improve people’s lives. 4-H began in Arizona in 1913—a full year before Extension was created.

A century later, UA Cooperative Extension operates in all 15 Arizona counties, on five reservations and four military bases and has faculty based in every department in CALS. The organization employs nearly 500 people and approximately 70 percent are funded on external dollars.
“Cooperative Extension leverages all allocated funds at a rate of 2.9, which means for every dollar invested, Extension increases that funding through external sources,” Silvertooth said. “Therefore, Cooperative Extension provides a direct and positive economic impact that creates jobs and local cash flow.”

Arizona Cooperative Extension is part of a national educational network of scientists and educators who help people solve local problems and put knowledge to use. Cooperative Extension is continually addressing new challenges in all areas it serves: Family, Consumer and Health Sciences; Agriculture and Natural Resources; and 4-H Youth Development.

“The entire state is our campus,” said Kirk Astroth, assistant CALS Dean and Director of Arizona 4-H Youth Development. In 2013, more than 478,000 Arizonans took part in programs, with 190,405 young people participating in 4-H and other youth development programs.

“The work of Extension is never done,” Astroth said. “As soon as one problem is addressed, new challenges arise which require the application of science, research and practical education to find solutions.”

In addition to long-standing, traditional production agriculture programs, agents help farmers battle new varieties of agricultural pests, provide support for grandparents raising grandchildren, combat rising obesity rates in children and adults and develop leadership skills for the children of deployed members of the military.

The original intent of land-grant institutions was to further science and education in agriculture and engineering. While those goals hold true today, equally as important is providing information and support to nurture healthy individuals and families.

“Our problems have changed and our public has changed dramatically in the past 100 years, but we continue to bring education to the people and bring science to bear on practical problems and find solutions,” Silvertooth said. “That is what we are here to do and I think we do it better than anyone else at a land-grant institution.”

Examples of the benefits of Cooperative Extension programs in people’s lives are included at extension.arizona.edu
Cooperative Extension
Centennial Honorees 2014

Campus
- Beryl Burt
- Bartley P. Cardon
- Jim Christenson
- Gerry Eberline-Schultz
- Barry N. Freeman
- Ellen Goldsberry
- Sarah Harman
- Howard Jones
- Colin Kaltenbach
- Al Lane
- Shirley O’Brien
- Kenneth S. Olson
- Charles U. Pickrell
- Roy Rauschkolb
- Gene Sander
- David M. Stewart
- Al Lane
- Shirley Jo Harris Taylor
- Ray Weick

Apache
- Dan Heap
- Dick Hext
- Charles Leonard Isaacson
- Ruth Patterson
- Dick & Myna Udall

Cochise
- G. T. “Gerry” Bohmfalk
- Don & Laura Burnett
- Betty Craig
- Joe Lane
- Louise Moser
- Claire Owen
- Carmy Page
- Dora Teran
- Bertha Virmond

Coconino
- Bill Brechan
- Ernest W. Chilson
- H. Stuart Houston
- Jim Mast
- Herb Metzger
- Bob & Judy Prosser
- Beth Tucker

Gila
- Robert G “Bob” Boice
- Lori Brown
- David Cook
- Kenny J. Evans
- James A. “Jimmy” Griffin
- Senator A.V. Bill Hardt
- Alvin L. Medina
- Cayci Vuksanovich
- Terry Wheeler

Graham
- Lee J Clark
- Ronald E. Cluff
- Farrel Dennis “Denny” Layton
- Carol Willis

Greenlee
- Mabel (Flint) Bussard
- Daisy Mae Cannon
- Bill Cook
- Richard Lunt

LaPaz
- Janice Shelton
- Woodie Winsans

Maricopa
- Bas Aja
- Grant Boice
- Leah Brilman
- Bill Emerson
- Lin Evans
- Jeannette Fish
- Ron Gass
- Cheryl Goar
- Marifloyd Hamil
- Phair Family
- W. Bruce Heiden
- Sharon Hoelscher-Day
- Jim Kirkpatrick
- Dan Klingenberg
- Charles “Chuck” Lakin
- C.B. “Doc” Lane
- George Peabody
- Pamela Perry
- Gary & Sharon Petterson
- Ron Rayner
- Gilbert “Shag” Rogers
- Emil & Ruth Rovey
- Mark & Carrie Schnepf
- Carol Ward-Morris
- Jim Webb
- Carl Weiler

Mohave
- Stuart Anderson Family
- Lynne Durrant
- Howard Grounds Family
- Robin Grumbles
- Frank Hunt
- Del Wakimoto

Navajo
- Senator Franklin “Jake” Flake
- Ann Jeffers
- Emma Malone
- Esther Peterson

Pima
- Evalyn Bentley
- Linda Block
- Jean Buzzard
- Cynthia Flynn
- Marian Hannon
- Billie Mauntel
- Barbara Stockwell

Pinal
- Oliver Anderson
- Lavern Chase
- Bill & Doris Combs
- Dora Duarte
- Jim & Mary Faul
- M. Alberta Harris
- W.K. Henness
- Edward Y. Hooper
- Keith Jones
- Louise Lucy
- Paul Prechel
- Lupe de Santiago
- Bill Stambaugh
- Hiawatha Vance
- Howard Wuertz
- Wilbur Wuertz

Santa Cruz
- Dan Bell
- Richard Harris
- Janet Paz
- Bill & Posy Piper

Yavapai
- John D. “Danny” Freeman
- Andrew Groseta
- Delbert Pierce
- Marta Stuart
- Deborah Young

Yuma
- Karen Bowen
- Fatima Corona
- Robert J Moody
- Vickie Steinfelt
- Eric Woford