



Extension Directions

April 2006

“To individuals, families, businesses and communities of Pennsylvania, Penn State Cooperative Extension is the engaged educational system that helps maximize potential with research-proven knowledge.”

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Message from the Director

Are We Making a Difference, and Does Anyone Care?

Recent critical assessments of Penn State Cooperative Extension in *Lancaster Farming* have brought to the forefront several important issues for us to ponder. Have we made a difference in the lives of our clientele, and if so, how have they benefited? Do the critics and our clientele know what we are doing or what we have done in the past? Do they really care?

It is our responsibility to listen to the comments of critics, and it is our responsibility to respond to their concerns. We need to be asking, “Are we really doing what our clientele want?” And if we are, where are the voices of support for what we are doing? Who is speaking up for what is important? Or have we become a nation of critics? Are our clientele observers of the democratic process rather than participants in the process? Where are the advocates who will take the lead in responding to the concerns that critics have raised?

As an organization, we continue to emphasize the importance of leadership development. Leadership is not just about assuming the responsibilities of an educator. Educators and faculty

also are in a position to affect the image of extension in the community. Our constituents and those who fund our work ask that we be accountable for our efforts. Accountability has become increasingly critical in an environment of diminishing financial support and competition for funding. While it requires more time and paperwork to report the impact of our efforts, complaints about paperwork might best be turned to communicating the 'content' of the paperwork to clientele and as justification of the public's investment. We need to help our clients recognize the economic, social, environmental, civic, and/or personal benefits they have gained from their participation in our educational activities. When you report to your clientele, advisory groups, and others, do you report about educational programs and activities or about results? We can no longer assume that someone else is looking out for our concerns. If we are making a difference, we must take responsibility to communicate the impact of our efforts to clients and stakeholders.

Leadership is like a muscle, it works best when exercised regularly. But leadership is not only essential within cooperative extension; leadership development needs to be infused as part of all programs. We must provide opportunities for our clientele and community members to develop the leadership skills that will empower them to take responsibility for the issues facing communities. We must teach the skills, build confidence, and motivate individuals to participate in the things that are important to them. And if we instill leadership, our clientele may in turn become active advocates for extension.

Cooperative extension has been serving the citizens of Pennsylvania for over 90 years, and we will continue to change and strengthen our organization. We do not, however, want extension to be analogous to the water supply—it is taken for granted until it is no longer available. What leadership role can each one of us take to ensure that we are doing the things that make a difference in the lives of our clientele, and at the same time foster leadership among community members so they become the voices of support for cooperative extension?

We have done much to help the individuals we serve improve their lives, their businesses and their communities. Take some time to think about your role in understanding the needs of clients as well as helping them develop their leadership skills. If our efforts deserve their support, our clients should assume the responsibility to publicly support our efforts. There is a Web site of Pennsylvania issues that you may want to check out to see what the citizens of our state list as key issues (www.issuespa.net). Think about how you frame your messages so that people connect your work with the issues that are important to them.

Best wishes,
Daney Jackson
Director of Cooperative Extension

News to Know

Public Issues Leadership Development Conference

A delegation of cooperative extension volunteers and educators will be attending the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference in Washington, D.C. during the last week in April. As part of the conference, delegates will visit federal legislators on Capitol Hill. The following extension administrators and staff will be attending: Daney Jackson, Dennis Calvin, Leona Joseph, Bill Kleiner, Cindy Kunes, Mary Seaton, and Mary Wirth. Educators representing professional associations include Don Fretts and Gary Sheppard, PACAA; Pam Paletta and Darlene Resh, PAE4-HA; Patreese Ingram, PEAFCs; and Jeff Myers, ESP.

The following volunteers will be attending as part of the Pennsylvania delegation: Bob Buhl, Erie County; Lee Curtis, Warren County; John Lamb, Lawrence County; Donna Ebersole, Perry County; Bill Roberts, Dauphin County; Todd Ashmore, Washington County; Ron Angood, Potter County; and Jorge Flores De Valgaz, Juniata County.

2006 CED Leadership Institute

The Leadership Institute for County Extension Directors will be held **May 3–4, 2006** in State College. This year's theme is about "Goodness and Greatness," Nuts and Bolts," and "Elevator Speeches." The first day will be devoted to the *Good to Great* philosophy, and day two will feature Laura Kalambokidis, University of Minnesota, for a discussion of current research on *The Public*

Value of Extension Programs. An invitation has been extended to our partners across the Outreach organization. We believe this opportunity will enhance our efforts toward becoming a more collaborative and cohesive organization.

Ruth and Robert O'Connor Scholarship

Field-based extension educators pursuing either a graduate degree or approved professional development program related to his/her discipline or extension responsibilities are eligible to apply for this scholarship. For guidelines and an application form, refer to the memo sent to counties on March 6 from Dennis Calvin. The deadline for applications for the O'Connor Scholarship is **May 16, 2006**.

Program Updates and New Directions

School Food Safety

The School Lunch Act requires school food authorities to implement a food safety program—based on Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) food safety principles—for the preparation and service of school meals served to children. HACCP is a systematic approach to constructing a food safety program that is designed to reduce the risk of foodborne hazards and to conform to guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Through a partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Division of Food and Nutrition, cooperative extension is the sole source provider for this training. Twenty-five extension educators recently received training on HACCP food safety principles. They will be delivering 6 to 8 hours of training to school food service personnel in more than 500 school districts in the coming months, reaching potentially 5,000 food service staff. Catherine Cutter, associate professor in the Department of Food Science, has provided statewide coordination for this project.

Did you know that...

- The Income Opportunities for Rural Areas program helps agricultural producers explore agriculturally based, non-traditional crops and enterprise opportunities. A survey to assess the economic impact of this regional program revealed that 65 businesses generated more than \$1 million in cumulative gross revenue, program clientele have invested over \$900,000 in starting these new enterprises, and the New Income Opportunities program enterprises created over 48 new part- and full-time jobs.
- The PA Saves pilot project, designed to assess the effectiveness of a financial education program on the knowledge and practices of adults, was offered in four counties. A significant difference was found between the treatment and control group, suggesting that knowledge increased because of participation in the program. Participants in the treatment group practiced and sustained positive financial behaviors in areas such as identifying financial goals, preparing a budget, recording amounts saved and spent, closing unused credit accounts, etc.

Well Done

Congratulations to **Nancy Crago**, senior extension educator in Allegheny County, recipient of the W. LaMarr Kopp International Achievement Award for staff. This award recognizes one faculty and one staff member who have contributed significantly to the advancement of the international mission of the University. Nancy is committed to internationalizing our communities. She participated in the Polish/American Extension Project, organized Extension International Study Seminars, and has assumed leadership roles in the national initiative to internationalize extension work. Well done, Nancy!

We Are Penn State Extension Proud

Patrese Ingram, associate professor of agricultural and extension education, received the College of Agricultural Sciences' 2005-2006 Diversity Achievement Award. Congratulations, Patrese for your leadership in developing curricula and programs and for your efforts in promoting diversity throughout the college and the community.

Congratulations to **Charles W. Abdalla**, associate professor of agricultural and environmental economics, for receiving the 2006 Penn State Award for Faculty Outreach. His efforts focus on water resources, land use, agricultural environmental policy, and public issues education.

Dennis Calvin, associate director of cooperative extension, recently received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Department of Entomology at Kansas State University. Congratulations, Dennis, for being honored by your alma mater!

The Extension Spirit

Team Building In Action

By Nancy E. Wallace, senior extension educator, Westmoreland County

Last summer, Westmoreland County extension educators, programs assistants, and support staff went on a float trip down the Youghiogheny River. Now you may be saying, "That's nice, but what does it have to do with this article?" Picture that float trip (or white water rafting, if you are more adventuresome) as a team building experience. It was just that. As with any team, rules, guidelines, and direction are integral components. The rules were set by the team owner (the outfitter), and everyone wore safety equipment. Three diverse teams were formed. The people in each raft had to decide who would paddle and who would steer. Each person knew he/she had a responsibility. The goal was fun, but to reach their destination each team had to work together. In one raft, the paddlers had to be reminded that the team leader was in control of the rudder. In one raft, leadership was shared. All in all, each team met their goal. Did everyone have to go on the float trip? No, alternatives were available. One group took a 12-mile bike trip. It was a low-stress team-building experience. They, too, had leaders and followers.

Again, why is this important? Team is an apt word to describe cooperative extension. The very essence of extension is team building. Sometimes team building is overt, as in the Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow program, organizing a new 4-H club, or developing a nutrition coalition. Sometimes team building is subtle and taught by role modeling. 4-H members and leaders watch as extension educators work together to make a round-up happen or an annual meeting or a showcase become a reality. They see team building in action. And whether we like it or not, 4-H members, leaders, and other participants in extension education try out the actions they see being modeled.

Does this mean extension educators have to watch everything they do? No, they are human. The former Westmoreland County extension director once reminded the county staff that they could voice their concerns and issues about the county program, each other, and even extension administration in the office. But as a team, we work together for the good of the organization. That was one of the legacies he left to Westmoreland extension. Is this hypocritical? No, it is human. When anyone enters the Westmoreland extension office, they will notice a kitchen—not unusual. Well, the rule in Westmoreland is that anyone can say anything "on the tile floor" (as long as you don't demean another person). What is said stays in the kitchen. Frustrations are left in the kitchen. Joys are shared, too.

Team building does have its challenges. Teams must have priorities. While teams have leaders and members, occasionally these roles switch. A team member may jump in when another member is not available. Team members respect each other. The challenge is setting specific priorities, stating those priorities, and keeping to those priorities. Westmoreland extension members try to follow this practice, but like everyone, we are not always successful. The important issue is that 'we try.'

Building the Westmoreland team is fun. It is hard work. It is continuous. It is caring for each other. Is the Westmoreland extension team better than the other 66 county extension teams? Emphatically, NO! But you might want to try a county team float, or bike trip, or annual staff fun days. You will experience team building. Try team building in action!

Leadership Thoughts

Lessons Learned

"Everybody wants to be in charge on a sunny day! Leadership is not bathing in the glory of your Team's effort. It is not reaping the spoils of a great day on the job. Leadership is accepting and enduring the hard and trying times. As a leader, you must relish the tough times. You must take control of adversity and turn it into circumstances you and your Team can live with. (Needham, 2003, p. 128)."

Reference: Needham, R. (2003). Team secrets of the navy seals: the elite military force's leadership principles for business. Kansas City: Andrews McMeel Publishing.

The **Well Done** section highlights a particular noteworthy extension education effort by an individual or team.

The **We Are Penn State Extension Proud** section recognizes an extension employee's outstanding accomplishments.

The **Extension Spirit** section enables Penn State Cooperative Extension employees to share meaningful work experiences, articulate the values and goals behind their efforts, and present inspirational ideas.

Send your suggestions for the **Well Done**, **We Are Penn State Extension Proud**, and **The Extension Spirit** sections to Margaret Koble, mak10@psu.edu. Nominations will be reviewed and selected by the director. The deadline for receiving nominations for the next issue of the newsletter is **May 19**.

NOTE:

After being distributed, issues of **Extension Directions** will be archived at: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/Newsletters/archives.htm>.

Please sent submissions to Margaret Koble, mak10@psu.edu.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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