

# NEW HEIGHTS

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter

May 2017

## The Perspective of the MM Secretary: Plan of Work Update

By: Sharon Reynolds, District Director-Ozark District, University of Arkansas Extension [sreynolds@uaex.edu](mailto:sreynolds@uaex.edu)



During the last Middle Manager's Conference Call on April 13, we discussed the progress on the 2016-2017 Middle Manager's Plan of Work. As always, visit the MM page at the SR PLN site for details and resources regarding the MM group: <http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/mm.html>. At this time, most of the items on the MM plan of work have been already accomplished. Our Plan of Work Major Accomplishments for this year include:

### Planning for the 2017 Middle Manager's Conference in Asheville, NC:

Evaluations from the March 2017 MM conference were outstanding. Most attendees reported that the conference was worth their organization's investment. Thank you to our NC friends for a great conference!

**Provide quarterly newsletter:** Eric Simonne is doing an excellent job keeping the newsletter on target. The format and topics have been interesting and useful. Thank you to those who have contributed to it!

**Update the 2012 MM best practices document:** Blake Lanford, Judy Ashley and Brenda Rogers completed the update and copies were emailed to middle managers.

**Identify person to receive free MM conference registration for MM Best Practices Participation:** Blake Lanford was the recipient of free registration.

**Confirm State point persons representing 1862 and 1890 institutions:** Gerald Jones, 1890 and Lonnie Johnson, 1862, are our representatives.

Plan of Work items still in progress are:

**Initiate an Innovation PLN pre-conference for 2017:** Sheri Schwab, Jeff Ripley, Jim Stewart and representatives from other PLN committees are assigned.

**Develop webinar series on Management Best Practices topics to be held in off-years of MM Conference:** This topic will be on the agenda at the 2017 PLN in Fort Worth, TX.

**Support the National Urban Extension Leaders Annual Meeting and Southern Region Caucus:** Sheldon Hammond is assigned.

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### Extension Leadership for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By: Blake Lanford, Clemson Cooperative Extension, [blakel@clemson.edu](mailto:blakel@clemson.edu)



Extension Middle Managers across the country are exposed to the changing generational dynamics that impact the workplace. Presentations offered by a myriad of Extension professional associations have addressed both the issues and opportunities encountered by organizations that are often made up of individuals from three distinct generations. In the article entitled, “the Future of Extension Leadership is Soft Leadership” published in the Journal of Extension in October 2016, the authors suggest that current Extension leaders – including Middle Managers- should adapt to attract and retain millennials and must know how to identify the abilities and qualities that future leaders will need.

So, what does this adaptation look like in to the very real world of Extension operations that Middle Managers deal with daily? The article and associated report goes on to suggest that there are several strategies that managers may deploy in pursuit of the suggested adaptation. The below referenced strategies include:

Reference:

Segar, J and Hill, P. (2016, October). The Future of Extension Leadership Is Soft Leadership. Retrieved from [https://joe.org/joe/2016october/pdf/JOE\\_v54\\_5comm1.pdf](https://joe.org/joe/2016october/pdf/JOE_v54_5comm1.pdf)

**Objective 1:** Implementation of new hiring practices focused on skills and abilities rather than educational background and experience.

**Strategy 1:** Work more closely with human resources to prioritize applicants and candidates.

**Objective 2:** Simplify bureaucratic and hierarchical structure in Extension organizations, allowing motivated professionals and innovative ideas to more readily surface.

**Strategy:** Increase transparency; request employee input more often; encourage openness.

**Objective 3:** Encourage regional collaborations among motivated professionals.

**Strategy 3:** Incentivize collaboration; offer mini-grant opportunities and performance review incentives; promote collaborative learning networks.

**Objective 4:** Provide more opportunities to motivate professionals in Extension.

**Strategy 4:** Offer grants for attending leadership and professional development opportunities; provide opportunities for recognition for creative and innovative work; dutifully implement mentorship programs.

Proactive steps that seek to reshape the organizational framework designed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to benefit the Extension workforce of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may result in greater retention of young professionals, attraction of young professional to serve in leadership positions, and the establishment of an organizational culture that embraces change and innovation.

Are you practicing the seven habits of highly effective MM's?



### Necessity: The Mother of Invention

By: Joann L. Milam, Southeast District Extension Director, [jmilam@uga.edu](mailto:jmilam@uga.edu)  
and Wade Parker, Southeast District A&NR Program Development Coordinator,  
[wparker@uga.edu](mailto:wparker@uga.edu), University of Georgia Cooperative Extension



The Southeast District has 18 out of 39 A&NR agents with less than three years of experience. Wade Parker, District Agriculture and Natural Resources (A&NR) Program Development Coordinator (PDC), is being stretched in his capacity to mentor and work with these new agents. Despite a statewide and district new agent training and assigning individual mentors to the agents, these inexperienced agents still need contact with the PDC.

Wade did not have the time needed to visit with each agent individually each quarter. He implemented a new strategy including working



with the agents *via* Zoom video conferencing, which included group and individual meetings.

Using Zoom, Wade and the new agent(s) are able to talk with each other having real “in the same room” connection. This provides opportunity to discuss issues and even trouble shot problems while working online. Our district is saving an average of \$100 on travel for each virtual trip plus four hours of the ANR PDC’s drive time. The time saved is more valuable than the travel dollars!

Meeting with new agents *via* video conferencing has proven to be effective and efficient. The agents are learning from each other as well as from the PDC.

### University of Tennessee, Institute of Agriculture, Extension

By: **Jim Stewart, Central Region Director,  
UT Extension, [jstewart@utk.edu](mailto:jstewart@utk.edu)**



“Change” is alive and well in UT Extension! Dr. Tim Cross was recently appointed as the Chancellor for the

Institute of Agriculture. This appointment created a vacancy for the Dean of UT Extension. Dr. Delton Gerloff is currently serving as the interim Dean for UT Extension. The nationwide search for the Dean of UT Extension is currently in progress.

Much progress has been made implementing our strategic plan. We celebrate “UT Extension Month” annually in March. All counties focus on a program-wide marketing plan during March to increase visibility of Extension. This has been a very successful marketing effort that was born from our strategic plan. We just completed our first series of LEAD95 (County Director Trainings). All new County Directors are required to complete this 4 module training. We have also just finished creating our soft skill competency system which will be used to direct training efforts. As a result of our strategic planning efforts, wellness and mentoring programs were also created.

### University of Arkansas

By: **Sharon Reynolds, District Director,  
[sreynolds@uaex.edu](mailto:sreynolds@uaex.edu)**

**Funding:** The University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture did not get an increase in funding from the state legislature this session. However, over the last two years, county partners have increased funding for Extension Agent salaries. A majority of counties have met the new funding goal for which we are very grateful.



**4-H:** More than 400 4-H members from throughout Arkansas descended on the State Capitol Building in February, to promote 4-H, tour the capitol and grounds, and sit in on a legislative session.

**ANR:** An overnight freeze in March brought temperatures down to the mid-20’s in the northern half of Arkansas, severely damaged much of the state’s peach production.

**FCS:** A state wide professional development conference for FCS and 4-H agents was held in April. Agents got hands on experience in shooting, editing, and uploading videos to promote their programs on social media. Andrea Harris, Regional Marketing Director, National 4-H Council led sessions on building the 4-H Brand.

**CED:** Development is a major priority for many rural Arkansas communities who are still feeling the results of the 2008 economic downturn. Community leaders will have an opportunity to learn what works at the 2017 Breakthrough Solutions Conference on June 7-8, at the state Extension Headquarters, 2301 S. University Ave. Little Rock, AR.

This year’s theme is “Re-Imagining Your Community/Region – Asset-Based, Community-Driven, and Technology Enabled.”



### Is Lead 21 For you? By: Rochelle Sapp, Leadership Development Specialist, University of Georgia [rsapp@uga.edu](mailto:rsapp@uga.edu)

LEAD21 is the national leadership program for faculty, specialists, program and team leaders, research station and center directors, district and regional directors, department heads and chairs, and others in land-grant universities' colleges of agricultural, environmental, and human sciences and NIFA. The 12-month program consists of three on-site sessions in June (Minneapolis area), October (Phoenix area), and February (DC Metro area) plus application assignments, peer coaching, and readings throughout the program. Each session focuses on the four core competencies of Leading Change, Managing Conflict, Communicating Effectively, and Fostering Collaboration beginning with the self at Session 1, focusing on groups and teams at Session 2, and concluding with organizational leadership at Session 3.



Each year LEAD21 accepts approximately 85 participants into the program from teaching, research and extension. The primary purpose of LEAD21 is to develop leaders in land-grant institutions and their strategic partners in order

to lead more effectively in an increasingly complex environment, either in their current position or as they aspire to other positions.

Individuals interested in participating may visit the LEAD21 website at <http://lead-21.org/> or contact Rochelle Sapp, Program Director, at [rsapp@uga.edu](mailto:rsapp@uga.edu). Applications for Class 14 will open in mid-September and are due by November 15th, 2017.



# LEAD21

## LEADERSHIP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

### Mentoring – More than just about the mentee

By: Matt Bengé, Extension Assistant Professor, University of Florida, [mattbenge@ufl.edu](mailto:mattbenge@ufl.edu)



Extension professionals do a lot of mentoring. The primary premise behind mentoring is to connect a new employee, or a recently promoted employee, to the

organization's resources and to teach new skills. Many Extension organizations provide specific training and curriculum that target mentors. In some cases, other organizations allow the mentor-mentee relationship to be enacted informally. Looking back, we can all think of differences between good and bad mentors, and chances are, we have had at least one of each.

Drs. Chopra and Saint are faculty at the Ann Arbor Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the University of Michigan Health System, and offer some unique tips for mentors prior to their mentor debut! Below is a short description of each, but be sure to check out the full article at the link below.

**Tip 1. Choose Mentees Carefully.** "Effective mentorship takes time. Mentors trade away hours they could use to pursue their own career goals and spend them on someone else's. Although the prospect of having an energetic, personable junior partner for a multitude of projects is appealing, having the wrong mentee can be painful."

Reference: Chopra, V., & Saint, J. (2017). 6 things every mentor should do. Available at: <https://hbr.org/2017/03/6-things-every-mentor-should-do>

**Tip 2. Establish a Mentorship Team.** "The exclusive, one-on-one relationship of mentor and mentee, long the norm, was ideal for a time when both parties stayed put in one institution or devoted to a single mission. That time has passed."

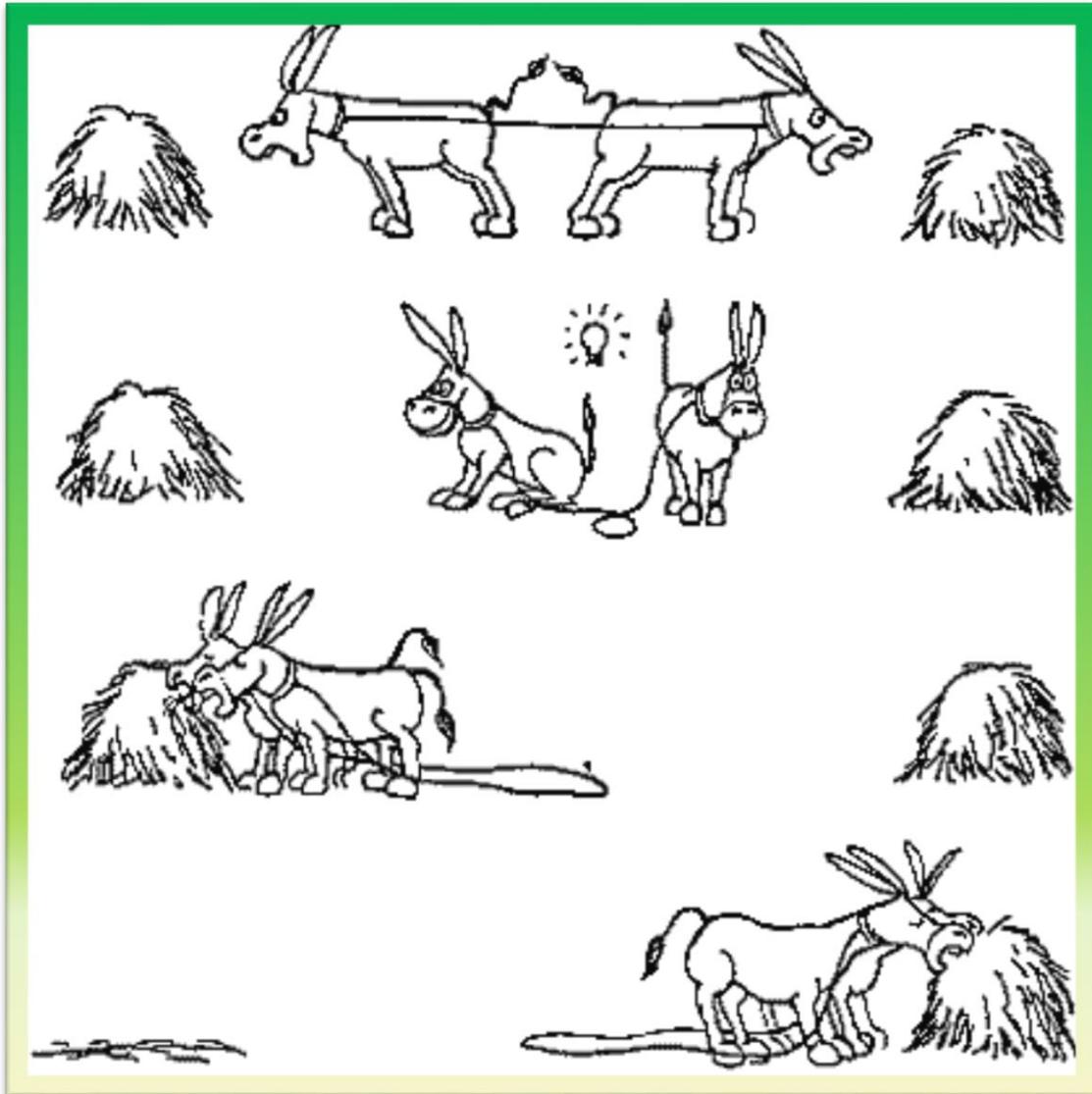
**Tip 3. Run a Tight Ship.** "The mentor role needn't take an excessive amount of time. Establishing firm and clear ground rules with mentees can improve efficiency."

**Tip 4. Head off Rifts...or Resolve Them.** "It's not uncommon for mentors and mentees to have a falling out. What seemed like a perfect pairing on the surface may wind up being a total mismatch."

**Tip 5. Don't Commit Mentorship Malpractice.** "Because mentors are in the dominant position in the relationship, it's easy for them to wield their power inappropriately – even if they're not fully aware of it."

**Tip 6. Prepare for the Transition.** "A mentor's accumulated wisdom and expertise must be passed on to the next generation. Good mentors make this process conscious, discussing challenges and satisfactions of mentorship with mentees."

## Conflict resolution skills: Turning a complex issue into a win-win!



**MMs always need to watch what they do and say....**

**MM** – Taylor, did you finish the strategic plan I asked you to finish last week?

**Employee** – I did not hear from you since so I assumed you did not need it.

**MM** – Last week I asked you and you said you would do it.

**Employee** – Right, but then I did not hear from you until now.

**MM** – There was not any reason to contact you because you said you would do it!

**Employee** – HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THAT?

**Employee** – I assumed your silence meant you changed your mind. This is just another plan...

**MM** – Can you finish your strategic plan by next week?

**Employee** – Sure. If you don't interrupt me about it every minute....

(Adapted from Dilbert by Scott Adams)

### MM's life is good in retirement!

I've sure got old!  
I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement,  
new knees, fought prostate  
Cancer and diabetes. I'm half blind,  
Can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine,  
Take 40 different medications that  
Makes me dizzy, winded, and subject to  
blackouts.  
Have bouts with dementia.  
Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and  
feet anymore.  
Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92.  
Have lost all my friends.  
But, thank God, I still have my driver's license.



### From the Redundancy Department of Redundancy: MMs are overworked!

MMs' memory's not as sharp as it used to be.  
Also, MMs' memory's not as sharp as it used to  
be.



### A conserver, a pragmatist and an originator offer different solutions to the same situation!

A conserver, a pragmatist and an originator were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of golfers. "What's up with those guys? We must have been waiting for fifteen minutes!" one comments. "I don't know, but I've never seen such inept golf!" another notes. The third one says, "Here comes the greenkeeper. Let's have a word with him." He said, "Hello George, What's wrong with that group ahead of us? They're rather slow, aren't they?" The greenkeeper replied, "Oh, yes. That's a group of blind firemen. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we always let them play for free anytime!"

The group fell silent for a moment.

The conserver said, "That's so sad. I think I will say a special prayer for them tonight."

The pragmatist said, "Good idea. I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist friend and see if there's anything she can do for them."

The originator asked, "Why can't they play at night?"

## National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) Southern Region Professional Improvement Meeting Chattanooga, Tennessee, August 3-4, 2017



Submitted by: Sheldon C Hammond, University of Georgia Extension,  
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NUEL is focused on addressing and assisting urban Extension professionals as they identify, develop and deliver educational programs for an urban audience.

**Registration: \$250.00**  
**Conference Location:**  
**Chattanooga Marriott,**  
**Two Carter Plaza,**  
**Chattanooga, Tenn. 374021**  
**423-756-0002**  
**\$100 NUEL room rate**

The NUEL Southern Region Meeting is a 1.5-day meeting intended to provide a forum for urban Extension professionals to discuss the changing demographics of neighborhoods, counties, and municipalities. Network with other urban-focused Extension professionals from the southern region. Engage with exciting speakers and thought-leading agents who will present innovative program models and explore common challenges facing urban Extension professionals. Discuss methods and examples of collaboration with city, county, state and NGO's. Programs focus on Urban Agriculture, Youth, and Distressed communities. As well as to help build an urban Extension presence both regionally and nationally.

To register for the conference:

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/Davidson/Pages/NUEL-Southern-Region-Professional-Meeting.aspx>

All Extension Professionals in 1862 and 1890's universities who work in urban/suburban communities in the Southern region are invited to participate in this conference.

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### West Virginia vacant



*Question to a 104-year-old  
retired MM.*

*What do you think is the best  
thing about being 104?*

*Answer: No peer pressure!*

**Remember to participate in our  
MM conference calls!**

**(10:00am EST/9:00am Central)  
Dial (712) 432-0931 and  
enter participant code 911522#**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Thursdays)**

**June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**2016 Southern Region  
Middle Managers Officers**

**Chair: Sheri Schwab (North Carolina State University)**

**Vice-Chair: Dee Cooper (Oklahoma State University)**

**Secretary: Sharon Reynolds (University of Arkansas)**

**Past Chair: Jeff Young (University of Kentucky)**

**Newsletter Editors: Eric Simonne and Cindy Laukert (University of Florida)**