

New Heights

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter Fall, 2017

In This Issue



- **Committee Updates**
- **Tools of the trade**

- **Professional Development**
- **Success Stories**
- **State Updates**
- **Upcoming Conference Call Dates**



1 - Hurricane Harvey reached the coast of Texas on September 2 as a then-category-4 hurricane.



2 - After a leaving a path of destruction in Cuba and the Caribbean, Florida south west coast was hit on September 10 by then-category-3 Hurricane Irma. Early on September 20, Hurricane Maria — a powerful Category-4 hurricane made direct landfall on Puerto Rico, bisecting the entire island and drenching it with feet of rain.



3 - Hurricane Maria's track towards Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico Updates- Dr. Rick Cartwright



Middle Managers:

Below is information from Dr. Rick Cartwright, University of Arkansas, Associate Vice President for Agriculture – Extension and Director, Cooperative Extension Service and Southern Region Middle Manager’s Committee adviser.

Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are US territories with somewhat limited University and Extension resources. However, we have historically treated them like “states” of the southern region and in ASRED as well. ASRED includes the 13 southern states and those two territories. Both territories have struggled financially over the years, although Puerto Rico does receive some Smith Lever funds, I understand. ASRED keeps the leadership personnel for both territories extension programs in the directory and email lists and maintains routine communication. NIFA also treats the institutions in both territories like states. In the past, Directors from both territories regularly attended ASRED and national meetings and even served as Chair of ASRED at one time, but attendance has waned over the last five or so years.

At this time, we have not received additional communication about proposed means for assistance from the southern states to either territory or their extension programs but we will keep you apprised when we hear more.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Response to Hurricane Harvey



Douglas Steele, Director, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service (Douglas.Steele@ag.tamu.edu)

The Extension mission is broad but locally relevant. And in times of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, wild fires, or tornadoes, Extension is often the network that provides support, communications, and logistical assistance to a myriad of relief efforts.

Hurricane Harvey was an unparalleled weather event for its size, destructive power and ensuing flooding. With rain still falling, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension was immediately called upon to “stand-up” a series of animal supply points, which quickly became 13 animal shelters, providing temporary feed and shelter for animals across more than 40 counties. The Texas Extension Disaster Education Network quickly mobilized to provide credible and reliable disaster preparedness and recovery educational materials to countless individuals, families and communities affected by the storm through its website, social media and through local Extension Agents.

More than 200 AgriLife Extension staff from across the state were mobilized to assist in the response, including staff who live in the affected area and were also coping with damaged homes and offices themselves. To manage the generous outpouring of donations from across the county, and to streamline the donation process, AgriLife Extension established an Animal Supply Donation hotline, managed from Extension state headquarters in College Station, TX. Nearly 5,000 calls were fielded regarding donation needs and offers to help. In addition, AgriLife Extension developed and distributed more than 3,000 Disaster Response and Mosquito Control Kits that included first aid kits, hand sanitizer, mosquito repellent, and resources on controlling mold, keeping food safe, and rebuilding after a disaster.

As the state shifts into long-term recovery mode, Texas Governor Greg Abbott and TAMU System Chancellor John Sharp have appointed AgriLife Extension to be the primary point of contact for Rebuild Texas in the 41 federally-declared disaster counties, provide daily updates on needs within each county and become a conduit of aid information for local cities, counties, and school districts.

Hurricane Harvey reinforced the significance of local Extension offices - having a trusted resource in the community and reliable, science-based information. The road to recovery will be long, but the dedication of Extension will not waver as we remain committed to Helping Texans Better Their Lives.



4 - With rain from Hurricane Harvey still falling, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension was immediately called upon to “stand-up” a series of animal supply points, which quickly became 13 animal shelters, providing temporary feed and shelter for animals across more than 40 Texas counties.



5 - With rain from Hurricane Harvey still falling, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension was immediately called upon to “stand-up” a series of animal supply points, which quickly became 13 animal shelters, providing temporary feed and shelter for animals across more than 40 Texas counties.



6 - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension staff and volunteers are packing emergency supplies to provide early relief to residents affected by Hurricane Harvey. Many early information requests dealt with how to correctly wire emergency generators and how to keep food safe during prolonged powerless periods

Hurricane Irma and Florida's Humble Heroes



Nick T. Place, Dean, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida (nplace@ufl.edu)

As Floridians awaited the landfall of Hurricane Irma, residents all across the State of Florida were desperately preparing for the havoc that this storm would bring. Among them were many faculty and staff located in the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) county extension offices and research and education centers. Like many, they live and work directly in the path of this disastrous storm.

There is a well-known phrase, that "when the going gets tough, the tough gets going". And our faculty and staff got going right away! But not out of harm's way. Many of our County Extension Directors (CED) and faculty have dual roles with county government. As such, they were called upon to staff emergency operations centers, worked in shelters, answered phone calls, provided assistance as called upon, and were preparing to assess the damage immediately after the storm had passed. Not only do they have their own families, homes and properties to attend to, but they are also responsible for county offices, agricultural fields, livestock and active research projects and demonstrations that also need attention.

Over the last few weeks, I have heard all the reports as to how we have secured property and how personnel were all accounted for. I have read blog posts, social media posts, facts sheets and articles written and distributed by our faculty providing the vital information on how to best prepare for the storm and also how to be ready to respond and recover from it.

Extension faculty are our neighbor who "stepped up to the plate". Here are some examples: like Angel Granger, UF/IFAS Extension Agent in Jackson County who spent part of the week fielding phone calls and giving out information regarding sheltering horses at the Jackson County Ag Center in Marianna. Like Sharon Arnold Treen, Flagler and Putnam CED, worked 12-hour daily shifts at the Flagler County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) through the duration of the storm. Sharon was there 48 hours from Sunday morning through Monday night during the anticipated worst part of the storm. As part of the food unit, she fed about 175 county employees, first responders, and volunteers who were working throughout the storm event. Likewise, Barbara Hughes, Seminole CED along with faculty Julie England and Hannah Wooten pulled 12-hour shifts at their local EOCs. Numerous other Extension faculty did similar work and worked long shifts to provide strong customer service for people facing issues and problems from this storm.

After the storm passed, there has been an incredible level of work and follow-up by our Extension faculty. Gene McAvoy, Hendry CED, became a national spokesman for Florida Agriculture as he was interviewed numerous times by national media outlets including CBS, Fox News, CNN and several state/local channels. Laurie Hurner, Highlands CED, worked with her staff and volunteers to arrange for services for those in need. Most interestingly, she arranged for the Tides-of-Hope Truck to come to the area to wash clothes of the many in-state and out-of-state utility workers who were working around the clock to restore power to the area. Colleen Larson, Okeechobee Regional Specialized Agent for Dairy, and her staff worked tirelessly to support the area dairies that experienced great devastation of barns, facilities and utilities. This included working with utility companies to expedite the restoration of power so that they could milk, feed, ventilate and care for the cows. They also worked diligently to bring meals and water to the many farmworkers on these dairies. This allowed them to stay focused on taking care of the dairy animals and facilities.

As a last example, Dr. Whitney Elmore, CED in Pasco County arranged for over 250 people, including University of Florida campus students and local 4-H members, to participate in a work day to help a blueberry producer. Over 100,000 blueberry bushes had been uprooted, twisted, or shredded by the

storm and all of his farmworkers had left the area because of the storm. Dr. Elmore and these volunteers worked tirelessly to stand up and re-stake all of these plants for this producer – one blueberry plant at a time.

Dr. Angie Lindsey is the UF/IFAS Extension Point of Contact (POC) to the Extension Disaster Emergency Network (<https://eden.lsu.edu>). She coordinated the gathering and sharing of vital information useful to Florida residents. Working together with FL-SART (State Animal Response Team) and the national Cooperative Extension network, we are benefiting from the lessons learned and proven strategies from our colleagues across the nation. Angie worked diligently to support our statewide faculty even while her own family and home were in the center of Irma's wrath.

These are just handful of the hundreds of UF/IFAS Extension faculty and staff who actively put service above self during a time of crisis. Just like they do every day. Thank you to all of them.

"IN ALL THESE CASES OF NATURAL DISASTER, EXTENSION HAS PROVEN TO BE COMMITTED, TRUSTED AND LOCAL -ONCE AGAIN."

Mark your calendars: The 2018 SR PLN Meeting will be held August 20-24 in Orlando, FL.



Have you Shared your Performance Review Instruments? Reminder



From the Chair

Please remember to share the performance review instruments used in your state, with Dee Cooper (dee.cooper@okstate.edu) who is collecting them for a further discussion on the topic. Please send your blank templates in pdfs or WORD format by **November 15** to Dee (dee.cooper@okstate.edu). Thanks!

IT Tools for Extension: Poll Everywhere



7 - [Poll Everywhere](#)

Jeff Young, Associate Director of Extension, Director of County Operations, University of Kentucky
(jeffery.young@uky.edu)

In a recent search for a tool to replace those infamous “clicker systems” that I’m sure many of us have invested in over the past few years, a colleague suggested I take a look at “Poll Everywhere”. Poll Everywhere is an audience response tool that works through “text messaging” or the “web” depending on the type of question you wish to ask.

Installation. The Poll Everywhere software works as an “add-in” to **Microsoft Power Point** and there is a free version that you can try with no commitment. You can find the Power Point, Keynote or Google Slides versions of the software “add-in” here: <https://www.polleverywhere.com/app>

(Note that there is also a Poll Everywhere app for your smartphone).

To get started, you will need to create an account. Remember there is a free version.

Then you can download the version that works for you. Be sure to close your slide show program (Power Point, Keynote or Google Slides) prior to downloading and installing. (Poll Everywhere will give you a reminder if you forget).

After software is downloaded and installation is complete, you can open your slide show program (Power Point, Keynote or Google Slides). You should have an additional option on your header ribbon called “Poll Everywhere” as shown by the blue arrow below.

Use. You are now ready to get started. The system is very simple to use. Just click on the “Poll Everywhere” button on the top ribbon. A drop down menu will be displayed. You can create a “new poll” or “insert an existing poll”. There are several options on the type of poll you want to create: Multiple Choice, Word Cloud, Q&A, Rank Order, Clickable Image, Survey or Open Ended. You can also insert images and other items to help make your slides more visually engaging. The data you collect can be downloaded in your favorite spreadsheet format.

In summary, “Poll Everywhere” is an especially helpful tool to help gather instant audience response. I would definitely recommend giving it a try!

Communicating Return on Investment (ROI) to Local Government Partners





Dan Goerlich, Central District Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension (dalego@vt.edu), Steve Kleiber, Executive Director, Business Operations and Strategic Initiatives, Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Lonnie Johnson, Jr., Associate Director of Field Operations, Virginia Cooperative Extension Johnson (lojohns2@vt.edu)

Cooperative Extension administration and staff often speak about the importance of communicating impact. With local government partners in particular, understanding and appreciating the value of the Cooperative Extension office is critical to maintaining and growing local funding. Local government partners should clearly understand Extension's value to decrease the likelihood of conversations about reducing funding for offices, or cutting positions within offices, especially in difficult financial times. Despite best efforts, however, conversations questioning the value of Extension do occasionally arise. In these cases, value can be best articulated with the financial return on investment.

The "Great Recession" of the late 2000's and early 2010's resulted in serious financial pressures on numerous Virginia localities. In turn, many localities began to look more closely at expenditures, often seeking additional justification for funds spent. In response, the Virginia Cooperative Extension **Return-on-Investment (ROI) spreadsheet** was developed to help localities make informed decisions. Although principally used during the above-mentioned time period, the ROI spreadsheet is still provided to localities on an as needed basis, such as this example shared with Halifax County in FY'14 (Fig. 1). In addition, the local budget request form was modified to illustrate the influx of state and federal funds, along with the total investment in the Cooperative Extension program, resulting from local government dollars. (the previous form only included the local request)

In conclusion, although the ROI tool is useful for communicating Extension's return on investment to local governments and stakeholders, the best approach is to proactively avoid having an Extension office find itself in the position of having to justify funding. This is accomplished by conducting high quality work and maintaining strong relationships with local government partners through regular communications. Assuming these pieces are in place, proactively sharing ROI locally simply communicates what they already know...that each dollar invested in Extension is money well spent.

Fig. 1. Sample Return-on-Investment (ROI) spreadsheet developed by Virginia Cooperative Extension personnel as a tool to communicate the value Extension to local officials and stake holders.

Virginia Cooperative Extension	
Return on Investment to	
Halifax County	
Halifax County Investment (Budget Request for FY 14)	
FY '14 Budget	\$ 96,518
Direct Return on Investment	
Halifax County Extension salaries paid by VT*	\$ 86,177
Halifax County Extension fringes paid by VT*	\$ 24,403
Specialist and Administrative Salaries paid by VT (2012) (pro-rated to Halifax County)	\$ 50,919
Specialist and Administrative Fringes paid by VT (2012) (pro-rated to Halifax County)	\$ 14,130
Direct Operating Budget Allocated to Halifax County VCE	\$ 24,318
VT Support of W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Center	\$ 12,000
VT operational support for IT and Mobile Phones	\$ 8,454
Professional Development Costs from VT Funds	\$ 7,200
Local Agency Funds	\$ 30,617
SNAP-ed Grant support for Nutrition Education (2012) (Halifax Portion)	\$ 73,930
	332,148
Off Campus Indirect Cost Rate at 23% - Waived for local governments in VCE	76,394
Value of Volunteer Hours	139,471
Total Support Provided by Virginia Tech and Virginia Cooperative Extension	\$548,013
For each \$1 invested by Halifax County, VCE return on that investment is	\$5.68

Input Sought: Webinar on Management Development



Jeff Ripley, Associate Director, County Operations, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension (j-ripley@tamu.edu)

As part of the MM plan of work, our group is planning to offer webinars on even years (on alternate years with the MM conference that is organized on odd years) possibly during the second week of April. This is to serve as a form of MM professional development. Please **send topic of interests for this**

webinar to Jeff Ripley at j-ripley@tamu.edu by Monday November 13, 2017. The first webinar is to be offered in 2018.

Avoid “Corporate Speak” in your Language



Rebecca Jordi, Nassau County Extension Director and Horticulture Agent, Florida Cooperative Extension service (rjordi@ufl.edu)

What did you say?

Research shows that phrases such as *Blue sky thinking* (creative ideas not limited by current thinking or beliefs), *Touch base offline*, *Game changer*, *It's on my radar*, *Peel the onion*, *Reach out*, *It's not rocket science*, or *Run this up the flagpole* -- often make the public, employees, and co-workers roll their eyes.

Seven in 10 workers admit they mentally groan and switch off when their boss tells them to *Think outside the box*, or *use the Strategic staircase* – (powerful way to break your strategic agenda into bit-sized pieces). Common confusing jargon includes *hot desking* which means sharing desks with other colleagues, *action that* which means put into practice and *look under the bonnet* which essentially requires an analysis of the situation.

Top 50 most annoying office lingo:

1. Blue sky thinking - empty thinking without influence
2. Think outside the box - think creatively
3. Touch base offline - lets meet and talk
4. Close of play - end of the day
5. Going forward - look ahead
6. No brainer - so obvious
7. Action that - put into practice
8. Drill down - investigate thoroughly
9. Thought shower – brainstorm
10. Flogging a dead horse - waste your efforts
11. Hot desking - sharing several desks with colleagues
12. Heads up - notification
13. It's on my radar - I'm considering it
14. Joined up thinking - thinking about all the facts
15. Bring to the table - contribution to the group
16. Punch a puppy - do something detestable but good for the business
17. Run this up the flagpole - try it out
18. Cracking the whip - use your authority to make someone work better
19. Moving the goalposts - change criteria

20. EOP - end of play
21. Working fingers to the bone - working very hard
22. Game changer - fundamental shift
23. It's not rocket science - it's not difficult
24. Hit the ground running - start work quickly
25. Ping - get back to
26. Low hanging fruit - easy win business
27. Singing from the same hymn sheet - all on the same page
28. Strategic staircase - business plan
29. Park something - hold an idea
30. Benchmark - point of reference
31. COB - close of business
32. Reach out - contact
33. Re-inventing the wheel - steal the idea from someone else
34. Dot the I's and cross the t's - pay attention
35. Best practice - most effective way
36. Al Desko - lunch at the desk
37. Backburner - de-prioritize
38. Pick it up and run with it - move ahead with an idea
39. Play hardball - act forcefully
40. This idea has legs - good idea
41. Synergy - two things work together
42. I'm swamped - busy
43. It's a win / win - good for both sides
44. Look under the bonnet - analyze the situation
45. Quick and dirty - quick solution
46. Peel the onion - examine the problem
47. Out of the loop - not involved in the decision
48. Wow factor - amazing

49. Helicopter view - broad view of the business

50. Elevator pitch - brief presentation So, please, don't find yourself picking your vocabulary from this list. All those around you will thank you – and may even listen more carefully to what you say. It is not rocket science! (oooops...)

Tailoring Recognition to Fit your Employees' Needs



"To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace." – Doug Conant

Matt Benge, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Agricultural Education and Communication, University of Florida / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (mattbenge@ufl.edu)

Employee recognition plays a key role in the success and continuity of productivity, efficiency, and organizational change. Research shows that employees who feel appreciated are more positive about themselves and their ability to contribute. In turn, employees with positive self-esteem are often the best employees. The research literature surrounding employee recognition provides a staggering vantage point to view recognition from:

- A lack of recognition is the second-largest risk factor for psychological distress in the workplace.
- Organizations with recognition programs that are effective at enabling employee engagement had 31% lower voluntary turnover than organizations with ineffective recognition programs.
- Companies with strategic recognition reported a mean employee turnover rate that is 23.4% lower than retention at companies without any recognition program.
- Companies using strategic recognition are 48% more likely to report high engagement.

However, not every employee views recognition with the same lens. Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences explains that not every person learns in the same way, proposing eight different modes of learning. In this same way, employees appreciate and value recognition in various forms.

Brun and Dugas (2008) suggested that recognition takes four main forms: (1) personal recognition, (2) recognition of results, (3) recognition of work practice, and (4) recognition of job dedication. Extension managers and supervisors can tailor recognition efforts to meet the individual needs and goals of each employee by utilizing the recognition practices outlined by Brun and Dugas in order to create a plan for recognizing employees.

Personal Recognition may occur by:

- Supporting social gatherings
- Organizing recognition ceremony among coworkers
- Sending personalized letters for life events
- Involving employees in the decision-making process

Recognition of Results may be done by:

- Giving a gift to mark a career goal/award/milestone
- Awarding raises and grants based on merit
- Sending notes to office employees highlighting successes

Recognition of Work Practice:

- Highlighting contributions, innovative thinking, and creativity at team meetings.
- Assigning productive employees to special projects

- Offering verbal thanks from clients for the quality of service

Recognition of Job Dedication:

- Facilitating the encouragement from peers to keep up effort and collective engagement
- Recognizing overtime
- Allowing employees time off to relax

Reference:

Brun, J, & Dugas, N. (2008). An analysis of employee recognition: Perspectives on human resources practices. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(4), 716–730.

Tips for Planning an Extension Event in the Revenue-Enhancement Era

At a time when Extension administration looks into revenue enhancement, assesses the public-to-private ratio value of Extension, and seeks to adapt business practices into Extension, the article “**6 Tips to Get Your Event Budget Planning Right**” provides a clear description of the early steps in organizing and offering an Extension event with a business state-of-mind:

1. Start the budgeting process early,
2. Update your event budget regularly,
3. Get multiple quotes from vendors,
4. Plan for the unexpected,
5. Find additional sources of income, and
6. Become a spreadsheet ninja.

Somehow, Extension has more or less followed this steps for years. For this business-minded, full article by Rachel Grate, [visit](https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/event-budgeting-ds00/) <https://www.eventbrite.com/blog/event-budgeting-ds00/>. Share your thoughts and comments with the group!

Impact Statements are a Great Tool in Telling the Extension Story



Stan Windham, Assistant Director County Office Operations, Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) educators and administrators are making an intentional effort to utilize impact statements to tell the Extension story to stakeholders, clients, and citizens. These statements have become an important and intentional communication tool to:

1. Show relevance to stakeholders, clients, and citizens
2. Tell a story of success and sometimes where efforts need to be refocused
3. Demonstrate the prudent use of and stewardship of funding
4. Demonstrate the Return on Investment of invested time, money, thought, and effort

Impacts can also be reported on administrative activities such as office efficiency improvements, programming successes such as saving farmers money, and financial successes such as an awarded grant. A return on investment can be demonstrated in almost all of these areas.

When current ACES Director Dr. Gary Lemme came to his current role, he brought with him a very **concise format for writing impact statements**. Two to three lines is typical. This has been an easy and focused way to tell our Extension story. Three other components of a good impact statement are the **topic**, the **impact**, and the **return on investment**. An example impact statement reads: *“Happy County, AL sought and secured a \$50,000 grant from the Youth Empowerment Association to enhance the delivery of the County 4-H Program. These funds will leverage County Commission funds already committed to a County Agent Assistant at the rate of \$15,000. Total County dollars spent in 2017-18 on 4-H Program delivery increased to \$65,000. Return on investment is \$4.3:\$1 (\$65,000/\$15,000).”*



8 - County Extension Coordinator SET Team Leaders meet in July of 2017 to plan and discuss their individual regions successes and impacts.

Joint 4-H Youth Development Programming—1862 and 1890 Partnership in Mississippi



**Gerald W. Jones, Director of County Operations, Alcorn State University Extension Program
(gwjones@alcorn.edu)**

TEAM: Together Each Accomplishes More

It has been said, that **“working together works.”** This statement is a genuine testament to the Mississippi 4-H Program. Alcorn State Extension Program and Mississippi State University Extension Program are proud to offer a vast array of programs to Mississippi’s youth, which promotes growth and provide opportunities to enhance learning through the application of the essential elements of 4-H.

In conjunction with this state-wide, collaborative effort, the Alcorn Extension Program serves 15 counties in Central and Southwest Mississippi, providing educational programs and activities for 4-Her’s in rural and suburban areas. State Specialist and Extension Agents from both institutions communicate on a regular basis to ensure that programs, events, and activities complement each other and are cohesive.

Alcorn State University Extension Program and Mississippi State University Extension Service collaborate on events such as the Southwest District Livestock Show, Project Achievement Day, South Volunteer Leader Forum, Counties 4-H Awards Banquets, and Club Congress. Staff and personnel from both Universities, 4-Her's and volunteers participate in these events.

This approach has proven to be a progressive model to illustrate the effectiveness of working together to achieve a common goal. Alcorn State University Extension Program and Mississippi State University Extension Service value the positive impact both universities have made with youth and volunteer development throughout the state. We are very grateful for the Extension Administrators continuing support of the partnership.

2017 Mississippi 4-H statistics at a glance:

- 38,893 live in towns under 10,000 and rural areas
- 14,431 live in towns and cities of 10,000 to 50,000
- 3,858 live on farms
- 1,367 live in suburbs of 50,000
- 3,069 live in cities over 50,000
- 51% girls, 49% boys

Source: Mississippi State University Extension Service



9 - These Hinds County, MS, 4-Her's, agents, volunteers and parents were the 2017 4-H Project Achievement Day Overall Contest Winners. Hinds County 4-Hers also won the County Attendance Award Trophy & the Spirit Award Trophy. Congratulations to all!

Preparing Future Agriculture Leaders



Carolyn J. Williams, Associate Administrator, Cooperative Extension Program, Prairie View A&M University (cjwilliams@pvamu.edu)

Experiential learning is a great opportunity for young leaders to explore the world and foster career options. Jasmine Rudd, a 12th-grade student who attends Red Oak School in Red Oak, TX, participated in the Youth Conservation Corps during the summer of 2017. Rudd was encouraged to apply for the all-expense paid summer job by the Dallas County 4-H Extension Agent – Cynthia Pierfax; Cooperative Extension Program of Prairie View A&M University. Rudd began exploring the field of agriculture when she attended an Annual Career Awareness & Youth Leadership Laboratory camp in 2015 on the campus of Prairie View A&M University.

The United States Youth Conservation Corps, part of the National Park Service, is a summer employment program for youth ages 15-18 that engages them in meaningful work experiences at national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, and fish hatcheries while developing an ethic of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Rudd spent three weeks in Orleans, CA with an internship with MobilizeGreen this past summer. Below is how she shares her experience:

“I am so grateful for this experience because of the different things it taught me and for opening my eyes to a part of nature that I would never had a chance to experience in my home town. We learned a lot about conservation and trail working. A typical day was either clearing a trail or clearing something that was making it difficult to drive or walk through the community of Orleans. I learned about teamwork because we had to work together as a team and communicate. When clearing trails and building fences, we all had to do our part for the team to complete our goal.

My favorite part about the internship was camping. I had a chance to swim in a river where the water was clear, and also went kayaking and white-water rafting. This was my first time to see wildlife up close – deer, snakes, bear and salmon.

It is an awesome opportunity for students going away to college because of the time separated from family. It also gave us everlasting friendships. Being with someone for three weeks creates a bond and you never want it to end. This was a well-needed experience.



10 - Twelve-grader at Red Oak School in Red Oak, TX, Jasmine Rudd learned about independent living, team work, natural resource conservation and trail work during an internship offered by the United States Youth Conservation Corps during the summer of 2017.

The Power of Horticulture Therapy in Kentucky

Willie Howard, District 3 Director, Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service (whowardj@uky.edu)

Kentucky Extension Agent Bethany Pratt, Horticulture Agent for Jefferson County Extension Office, conducts a Horticultural Therapy Program with women living in a local addiction recovery center. See Kate Springer's full article "The Garden offers growth for women in recovery for addiction" at <http://www.wdrb.com/story/36124287/garden-offers-growth-for-women-in-recovery-for-addiction>.

Arkansas: Online Performance Appraisal Reporting



Beth Phelps (bphelps@uaex.edu), Ouachita District Director, University of Arkansas

The University of Arkansas developed a new performance appraisal framework for county agents and staff chairs in 2016. The goal was to simplify the process by moving from being narrative based to lists and check lists. Another goal was to reduce asking county staff to submit information in multiple formats.

Part of the new process was to move to an online Performance Appraisal Reporting Form. This goal was accomplished this year, 2017. This is evaluation season for Arkansas and agents have currently used the online document to submit their Performance Appraisal Reporting document.

How it works: Agents access the online document via a link in the policy guide. They can start and work on their document throughout the year. Once they create a document, a link is sent via email so they can access their document at any time. They access their document using their Active Directory password so the document is only accessible to the agent for editing. When a document is created, the immediate supervisor and district director also receive an email with a link to the document. They can view and print, but cannot edit. When the agent has completed their document, they submit. The immediate supervisor and district director receive an email stating that the document has been submitted with a link to the submitted document. The district directors have access to a report listing all agents and staff chairs documents with a time stamp of when the document was started and submitted. They can preview and print from this report.

[Performance Appraisal Guide for County Agents](#)

<https://uaex.edu/extension-policies/templates/eeval-149.pdf>

[Performance Appraisal Reporting Form for County Agents - This is a PDF. You can only access the online form if you are an Arkansas CES employee.](#)

<https://uaex.edu/extension-policies/templates/eeval-150.pdf>

[Performance Appraisal Summary Form Extension Agents and Staff Chairs](#)

<https://uaex.edu/extension-policies/templates/eeval-151.pdf>

Thoughts and Reflections from a Florida 4-H Agent Focus-Group on how to Increase 4-H Agents' Job Satisfaction and Retention Rates.



Eric Simonne, Professor and Northeast District Extension Director, Florida Cooperative Extension Service (esimonne@ufl.edu)

Nothing makes us more uncomfortable than conflicting information and subsequent conflicting emotions. Yet that is when we do our best thinking. Enjoy these conflicting quotes: do they sound familiar to you?

- “Either our health suffers, mental health suffers, marriage suffers, or our children suffer.”
- “You can see we have a lot of problems with our County Extension Directors (CED). They drop in to see a program. They have no idea what you did before, they have no idea what you did after. They don’t even know what you’re doing during it because they come in for like 15 minutes. Then they’re like the program is great. Send me a photo so we can publish it.”
- “I don’t see my District Extension Director (DED) until it’s time for my review or maybe a couple of times a year at faculty meetings or whatever; but as far as any support, it’s just what I didn’t do when I get my review and it’s the same thing with my CED... you can’t support someone in their work if you never observe it.”
- “DEDs are great, at least mine is, he’s amazing, he’s really helpful and he’s there when you need him to be and he tries to help you. Then you have your CED that’s the opposite.”
- ““Why the h*** do you keep doing it? I don’t understand.” And I looked at him and said, “I love what I do.” He said, “No you don’t, you don’t love what you do, you’re miserable. I don’t know how to help you because you won’t walk away from your job. Why? Why are you still there?””
- “In 4-H, family comes first; just not that of your 4-H agent.”
- “If you can see that one kid in six months make a complete change -- how do you write that up to make the University happy? I don’t know. It makes me stay.... You can change a kid’s life.”
- “I noticed this: there’s the “old Extension” and the “new Extension.” You have people that have been around forever -- the dinosaurs; they have their own way of looking at things. Then there’s New Extension that the University is hiring nowadays. The younger generation has good hard workers but if they never feel that they are valued and appreciated and feel that they are overworked, then they’re going out the door.”
- “I *do* believe that I can still make an impact on youth; I *do* believe in the 4-H program.”

My stint as an Interim DED: Lessons in accelerated learning method



Ron Rice (pictured in blue above), Palm Beach County Extension Director, University of Florida/IFAS (rwr@ufl.edu)

In April 2017, UF/IFAS Senior Associate Extension Dean Tom Obreza asked if I would accept a 5-month interim DED position with responsibilities over 12 counties in Southeast Florida. “NO” came first to my mind (with images of work-family balance) and my mouth replied “YES”. So much for my comfort zone. The next 5 months were challenging and sometimes stressful, but also priceless. I am honored that my administration entrusted this leadership role with me. Below are my impressions and take-home advice for others.

Early Preparation

- The CED/DED transition is abrupt with no training. You learn on the job.
- Secure “buy-in” from your county administrator, since DED work mostly benefits “other counties” and university administration.
- Appoint a qualified veteran agent as “interim CED”, and delegate CED “busy-work” to this lucky individual. Be honest and tell your agents/staff that your attention to them will be reduced.
- Some CED roles you cannot delegate (strategic planning, county government demands, public/private partnership relationships, employee issues). Keep attending them!
- Introduce yourself to your campus extension operations staff since they understand “the system” and are your best resource for help (county MOU issues, FMLA policies, complicated salary funding strategies). I was slow to tap into these experts on campus.
- Use an electronic calendar with reminders that synchronize with your smart phone.

General Work Day

- The number of e-mails and phone calls from county agents and CEDs will explode, often with bewildering requests involving policies/procedures that you may not understand.
- Time management, prioritization, and triage are required since unplanned work demands are the daily norm. You may never be comfortably caught up.
- Expect 10-11 hour work-days (plus partial weekends), and county/university visits. Your family must be patient during your interim adventure.
- As CED, managing a multi-step administrative process (filling a vacant agent position) is challenging, but DEDs handle numerous concurrent processes across multiple counties.
- Some DED tasks appear daunting (negotiating parts of a county MOU). Keys to success include good preparation, face-to-face county interactions, honesty, negotiation transparency, and showing enthusiasm for the process.

High Points

- Meetings with the Deans, Program Leaders, and other DEDs provided excellent insight on how extension strategic initiatives are crafted, and the resulting camaraderie is valuable to me.
- Interim DED is a crash course in leadership that highlights the value of empowering CEDs and their agents to find solutions to troublesome issues. Hurricane Irma was a special test case, where many CEDs/agents exercised exemplary leadership under difficult conditions.
- Everyone was very forgiving when I made mistakes or dropped the ball. I have greatly improved my personal relationships with my entire Extension family, and that's golden.

Videos of the Month



*11 - Do you give **feedback to your agents** for anything other than positive reinforcement or behavior change? Your feedback is their compass and their guide.*



12 - *Don't fire them yet: It would cripple our economy and China would take over! Another resource worth looking at If we laugh at ourselves, maybe we are getting it (finally)!*



13 - *We always talk about millennials and their approach to work – like here, if they were lumber jacks*



14 - *Yet, have you ever wondered what middle schoolers want to do when they grow up?*



15 - Want to be an HR director?

The SR PLN committee working on the Newcomer Orientation wants to share this video with everyone coming to PLN. Even though we may not all be newcomers, we could all use a refresher now and then!

http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/files/2017_conference/PLN%20Orientation%20Video%2081017.mp4

"Quotes"

Man-despite his artistic pretensions, his sophistication, and his many accomplishments-owes his existence to a six inch layer of topsoil and the fact it rains... ". Paul Harvey

"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, relearn and unlearn". Alvin Toffler

"Hire good people and let them do good work". Marvin Weaver

"It is not how good you are; it is how good you want to be." Paul Arden

"The world is a book. Those who do not travel only read the first page." St. Augustine

On the light side:

I am a middle manager: what is your superpower?

I've got a lot of procrastinating done today!

The shortest horror story: Monday.

I am not perfect but I am a limited edition.

Take out people's best and worst; what is left is who they really are.

Upcoming Conference Calls



Please call 605-468-8029 and enter participant code 911522#

All calls start at 9a.m. CTS / 10a.m. ETS

- February 12, 2018
- April 12, 2018
- June 14, 2018
- July 12, 2018

Miss a call? Here's a link [meeting minutes](#).

Southern Region Middle Manager Officers

Chair: Dee Cooper (Oklahoma State University)

Vice-Chair: Sharon Reynolds (University of Arkansas)

Secretary: Blake Lanford (Clemson University)

Past Chair: Sheri Schwab (North Carolina State University)

Newsletter Editors: Eric Simonne (University of Florida) and Blake Lanford (Clemson University)

Administrative Advisors:

Dr. Rick Cartwright, University of Arkansas, Associate Vice-President for Agricultural Extension,
University of Arkansas

Dr. Carolyn Williams, Associate Administrator for Extension, Prairie View A & M University

Visit us on the web at srpln.msstate.edu/pln/mm.html