

# NEW HEIGHTS

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter

July 2017

## The 2017 Southern Region Program Leaders Meeting is Fast Approaching: Are you Ready?

By: **Sheri Schwab** – Associate Director and Director of County Operations, North Carolina Cooperative Extension  
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Friends, we are mere days away from another engaging Southern Region Program Leaders Network (SRPLN) meeting in Fort Worth, TX. Are you registered yet? The theme this year is “Engaging Communities: Worth Doing Together.”

(Check [http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/2017\\_srpln\\_conference.html](http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/2017_srpln_conference.html) for details) Sounds like a tremendously rich topic that will allow all of us to take something away to use in our home states.

The pre-conference topic is one we will be all-ears for: **Succession Planning**. I am sure we will continue this important discussion into our own Middle Managers meeting time. In addition to these joint sessions, we will spend time working on our own **Plan of Work** to be executed in the upcoming year under our new MM Chair, Dee Cooper. Bring your ideas and thoughts so that we can work to set the bar high and deliver quality outcomes within SRPLN. Check hotel reservation.

Several committees have asked to visit us for our input and collaboration. I am sure we will find focus areas that will be “worth doing together” with these other teams. Need transportation?

Lastly, this annual meeting presents an opportunity to explore new ideas, share failures and successes among colleagues to help gain insights and more deeply process those experiences with experienced Extension professionals. Those are some of the most valuable exchanges we have all year. Bring an open mind, a rested body, and Your thinking cap. You won’t want to miss it! Get ready!

## IN THIS ISSUE

• • •

The 2017 Southern Region Program Leaders Meeting is Fast Approaching: Are you Ready?	1
Determining Extension’s Role in Controversial Community Issues	2
A Message from Your Program Leadership Committee	5
Mentoring in Extension - Tips to Increase Successful Relationships	6
The Reading of the Month: A Minor Miracle Going on in Florida	7
Middle Management Professional Development Thoughts on Leadership	8
Development for the Extension Leader/Director	9
Report on Obesity Released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	12
Food Sustainability Index - A Global Study on Nutrition, Agriculture, and Food Waste	12
Check this Blog out: The Extension Committee on Organization and Policies (ECOP) Monday Minute	12
New Middle Managers	13
Southern Region MM State Contacts	14

# Determining Extension's Role in Controversial Community Issues



By: **Dan Goerlich** – Central District Director  
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Over the last few years, several controversial issues

have offered Extension faculty an opportunity to facilitate community dialogue and apply conflict resolution strategies. Proposed uranium mining, fracking, and interstate pipeline construction represent three recent examples in Virginia. In many cases, these are controversial issues – sometimes referred to as “wicked issues”. It is our opinion that Extension responds by not taking any side on the issue rather than engaging the community. However, Extension has a role in facilitating public issues dialogue and assisting communities faced with controversial issues.

How does an Extension professional decide whether to become involved in a controversial public issue, and in what way? We propose the following thought process for faculty to consider when an issue begins to arise (Fig. 1).

**Content approach.** This process begins by asking the question: “is there definitive research-based information on this topic?” If the answer is “yes,” then faculty can play the role of content expert and provide factual information to help clientele achieve informed decision-making. Or, go a step further and implement the Extension Programming Process to address concerns with educational

programming that helps clients achieve positive outcomes.

### **Process approach.**

Quite commonly, if definitive research-based information is not available on that particular issue, or the complex problem involves dueling scientists, Extension faculty should step back from the issue and take no role. When “facts” alone are not enough to resolve an issue, the conflict usually involves deeply held human values-. This constitutes the most challenging situation. In these cases, we encourage faculty to set aside personal discomfort to focus on what is in the best interest of the community. Consider if there is an opportunity, as a facilitator, to help the community reach consensus or achieve higher ground and apply the behaviors (Dukes et al., 2000) that utilize principled negotiation theory (Fisher & Ury, 2011). If the skills to lead this type of engagement are lacking, the Extension educator would seek support from an external facilitator or mediator who understands the facilitation process.

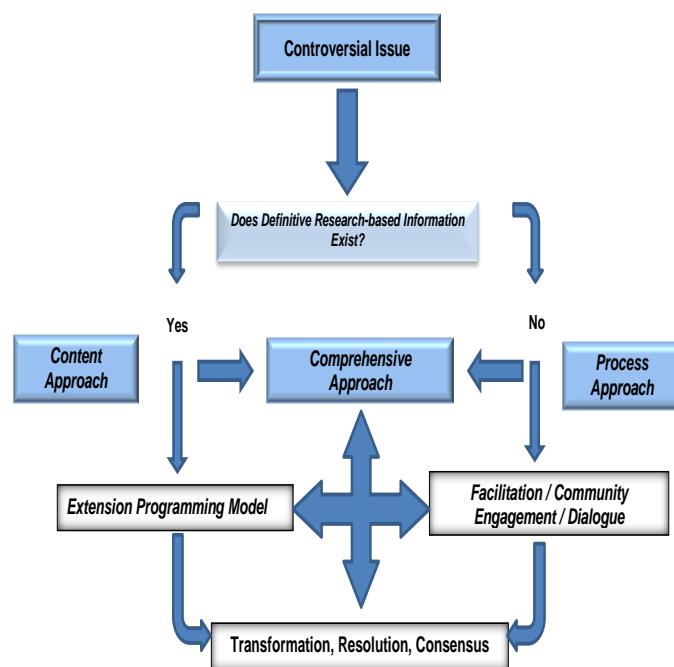
**Comprehensive approach.** When the issue is laced with potential for conflict and research-based information is lacking, Extension educators should apply a more comprehensive approach. Listening intently to the goals of the group (Covey, 1990), the agent will: build an



understanding of the issue; assist the group in defining the shared expectations and clarifying the interests and positions; schedule presentations by those who have content knowledge; lead discussions on the values, interests, and vision held by the group and; ultimately support the group in applying principled behaviors that guide the members to reaching consensus and building stronger working relationships.

Handled appropriately, the long-term benefits to the community, the Extension organization, and the faculty member of facilitating public issues outweigh the risks and costs. Proper training and sound judgment are critical to success in this role (Patton & Blaine, 2001). In cases where faculty do not feel that they have the skills or time to be successful in this endeavor, a dedicated Community Viability or Community Resource Development Extension professional skilled at facilitation could assist with leading the dialogue, and/or lead in-service training sessions that provide faculty with improved facilitation skills and confidence. In either case, reflecting on the availability of definitive research-based

information in the early stages can help faculty determine whether to respond with content, respond with process, or implement a comprehensive approach.

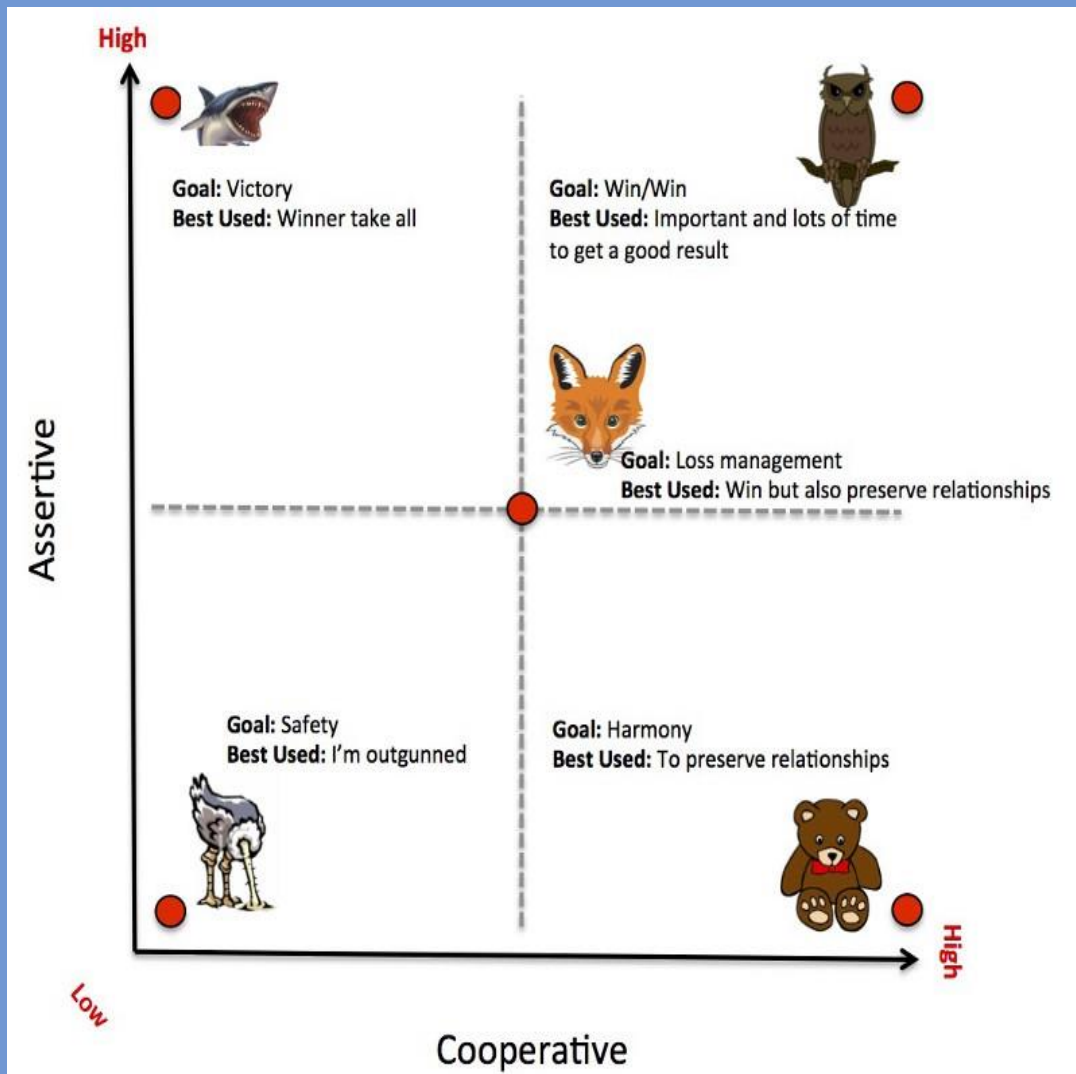


**Fig. 1.** A thought process for Extension faculty considering their potential role in controversial public issues. (From Goerlich & Walker, 2015)

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## The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument:



Sample conflict resolution strategies based on combinations of assertiveness and cooperation. Individual's preferred styles of conflict resolution may be determined by using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

Do you know your preferred strategy? When is another one best suited?

## A Message from Your Program Leadership Committee



By: **Lonnie Johnson** (1862's PLC representative; Southeast District Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension; [Lojohns2@vt.edu](mailto:Lojohns2@vt.edu)) and

**Gerald Jones** (1890's PLC representative; Director of County Operations, Alcorn State University; [Gwjones@alcorn.edu](mailto:Gwjones@alcorn.edu))



The Program Leadership Committee (PLC) has been working diligently to develop a strong and meaningful agenda for the 2017 SR-PLN, Association of Extension Administrators (AEA), and Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED) joint meeting to be held in Fort Worth, TX on August 21-25, 2017. You should have recently seen the announcements for registration. The theme for the conference is **Engaging Communities: Worth Doing Together**. This year's conference should prove to be a good one with a pre-conference agenda that includes a brief newcomer orientation as well as an important interactive session on Leadership Development and Succession Planning. Jeannette Johnson, Organizational Development Officer, Tarrant County, TX will be helping us to answer questions like: **Are you confident that someone within your organization can one day take your place and how are you planning for that transition?** Topics of discussion for this session will include: Importance of leadership at all levels of the organization; Different areas of leadership development; Leadership competencies; Planning for leadership succession; and Leadership in different generations.

Our Keynote speaker this year is Rich Harwood, president and founder, of the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation. The Harwood Institute for Public Innovation is a nonpartisan, independent nonprofit that teaches, coaches and inspires people and organization to solve pressing problems and change how communities work together. This will be a great opportunity for us to learn some innovative approaches to create change in communities and deepen our extension impact.

Along with our normal committee meetings, there will be a series of Ignite Sessions spread throughout the conference so we can hear and learn from our fellow extension peers about successes that have had in their communities. I believe that the PLC has developed a very engaging general session and that the all of the committees have developed individual agendas based on their individual plan of work. We hope to see you in Fort Worth in August.



### Tips to Increase Successful Relationships

By: **Jeff Ripley**- Associate Director – County Operations, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service ([j-riley@tamu.edu](mailto:j-riley@tamu.edu))



According to Chip R. Bell in his article, “Mentoring as Partnership”, a mentor is simply someone who helps someone else learn something that he or she would have learned less well, more slowly, or not at all if left alone. While we have had a mixed bag of results with mentoring, our successful mentoring relationship have typically been due to a few common characteristics.

Successful mentors have been described by their mentees in some of these ways:

- Leader by example
- Positive and caring
- Team attitude
- Patient
- Experienced
- Available
- Encouraging
- Truthful
- Open minded
- Sharing
- Anchor

These are just a few examples of what makes a successful mentor for a newly hired Extension Agent.

Some other factors that have contributed to a successful relationship (or lack of success) include:

- **Time of year** – certain times of year are so focused on one activity, they see only limited responsibilities of the job
- **Location** – Close geographic proximity between mentor and mentee has led to ongoing relationships and greater success
- **Similar county situations**
- **Similar personalities and styles** – sometimes there is a natural fit, and sometimes there is not.

Finally, a few things that mentees list as “relationship killers” are on the DO-NOT-DO list:

- Don’t just criticize; make suggestions
- Don’t try to solve all their problems; listen
- Don’t try to give advice on everything; encourage self-reflection
- Don’t encourage the mentee to be totally depended on the mentor; coach
- Don’t complain about your own problems, your co-worker, and/or your supervisor; use your own mentor for that!
- Don’t be too busy when the mentee needs a little guidance and support: be accessible
- Don’t take responsibility for the mentee’s programs or duties; empower

While there is not a fool-proof method to guarantee success in a mentoring relationship, we have seen increased levels of success if most of these factors exist in the relationship. One thing is for sure, mentoring in Extension is a critical component of bringing new employees on, and anything we can do to increase the chances of success is worth our effort as Middle Managers.

### A Minor Miracle Going on in Florida

**By: Jack Payne, University of Florida – Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Senior Vice-president for Agriculture and Natural Resources ([jackpayne@ufl.edu](mailto:jackpayne@ufl.edu))**

*At a time when the contribution of agriculture to the food production and distribution is often misunderstood or misrepresented in our country, this short article that appeared in the July 2017 issue of Growing Florida well summarizes a message that applies to all of the Southern Region States and land grant institutions. Here are some notable quotes:*

*“More than 1,000 people a day are moving to Florida, and we pave over many farms to make way for their subdivisions. Yet the new supermarkets that pop up to feed these newcomers all contain aisle upon aisle of Florida-produced food.”*

*“This success story [of how Florida agriculture keeps the shelves of supermarket full] is led by a strong commissioner of agriculture, with science and innovation provided by the University of Florida, the state’s land-grant university, and a supportive collection of commodity and stakeholder groups.”*

*“Unless we stop eating, Florida agriculture has no choice but to grow.”*

*“Young people are beginning to see it too, as a new generation of idealists fills our colleges and universities. They aspire to feed the world through careers in science and technology. They see careers in biology, genetics, engineering, computer science and many other scientific and technological fields as the way to contribute to solutions.”*

*“The entire food system collapses without agriculture.”*

*Of course, the reading experience will be more powerful to Southern Region Middle Managers by replacing “Florida” with one’s state name and “University of Florida” with one’s land-grant institution name.*

*For the full article, visit*

*<http://growingfl.com/news/2017/07/agriculture-a-minor-miracle-going-on-in-florida-2017-07-03>.*



*“I just don’t believe the naysayers who say Florida agriculture is in decline. I see the story on your supermarket shelves, on your restaurant menus, and in your farmers’ markets. I see it in farmers using technology to produce more food than ever. I see it in students preparing to dedicate the next 40 years to food production.”*

**Dr. Jack Payne, University of Florida – Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Senior Vice – president for Agriculture and**

### Thoughts on Leadership

By: **Laura Perry Johnson** – Associate Dean for Extension, University of Georgia ([lpj4h@uga.edu](mailto:lpj4h@uga.edu))



I am still growing up!). What is much more difficult is the consistent practice of the things you believe in. The following are some very simple thoughts on leadership (and life!) that I believe in and try to practice every day. I often do not attain perfection – or even come close – but it is helpful to know what the goal is:

**Be nice!** Treat people like you want to be treated; set the example; be consistent; don't ask people to do things you are not willing to do yourself.

**Work hard!** This was the number one thing I learned growing up on a farm. No matter what the job – do it well. You learn something from every job and every situation – lining. If you do it with a bad attitude, it cancels out the good -- so you may as well be glad to do it! The best way to get the job you want is to be excellent at the one you have.

**Communicate honestly.** In my opinion, it is hard to communicate too much – others can tune you out, but they cannot ready your mind. Don't withhold information you can share; explain your decisions. When there is uncertainty, people make stuff up (and it is usually incorrect). Listening and hearing are very important parts of communication.

**Be trustworthy and trust others.** Expect the best in yourself and others and you will usually get it! Br fair – but fair is not always equal. Be prepared to explain when you can and say when you cannot. That builds trust.

**Make a decision.** Do your homework and get lots of input, but don't be afraid to be bold. When you mess up – admit your mistakes and say you are sorry. Don't be paralyzed by indecision - almost everything is fixable or forgivable!

**Take risks.** Don't be afraid to make a mistake; accept the blame and share the credit. It is ok to be scared – leaders act in spite of their fear.

**Be a team player.** Know your part of the program, but see the big picture and be willing to compromise. Support the greater good. Hold yourself accountable – do not depend on others to do that for you.



**Be bold with problems.** Ignoring problem almost never works! It usually only gets bigger. The hard part is dreading the confrontation or the task – the doing is not nearly as hard! Be straightforward and honest – say what you mean without beating around the bush. Deliver the message in the way you would want to receive it.

**Connect!** Make connections and develop networks wherever you go. Help others and they will help you. Never be fake or a suck-up – get to know others genuinely!

**Be a cheerleader.** Build others up; thank; recognize; empower. A leader's job is to build capacity – not make themselves indispensable. Hire people that compliment or challenge you – not clones of you.

**Be a lifelong learner.** Never stop getting better. Stay current with the literature or the field. Stay up with current events.

**Embrace change!** Don't be afraid of change; challenge the status quo. Look for opportunities in the bad times – there is usually a silver lining or a great lesson to be learned! Change is inevitable – you may as well learn to love it!

**Have fun!** Love what you do or quit! Most jobs are too hard to do if you don't love them. If you have to do it; you can do it mad or do it glad. You may as well have fun!



## Development for the Extension Leader/Director

**By: Matt Benge – Assistant Professor, University of Florida ([mattbenge@ufl.edu](mailto:mattbenge@ufl.edu))**

Leadership and professional development skills are essential in any organization, big or small. Individuals with an outstanding grasp of technical, human, and conceptual skills have an advantage in today's business world. The day-to-day leadership roles, as well as organizational shifts and changes, present major challenges for Extension leaders to overcome, and very few Extension leaders have the leadership competence appropriate for today's Extension organization. A changing landscape prescribes a change in the approach of delivering professional development programs for the Extension workforce. Shrinking budgets, travel restrictions, and busy schedules make it difficult for Extension professionals to participate in high-quality, face-to-face development opportunities; Extension must therefore strive to find new and innovative ways to develop its employees.



The Program Development and Evaluation Center (PDEC) at the University of Florida/IFAS Extension is developing an online orientation program for new County Extension Directors (CEDs). Modules should be accessible by the end of the year. The program is based on current research competency trends (Fig.1), and will provide new CEDs with the “need to know” information as the leader of their County Extension Office. The program aims to onboard new CEDs during their first three months on the job, with a targeted focus on administrative and leadership responsibilities. The 9-module program (see list below) will be delivered via online instruction, and participants can complete each module at their own pace:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Roles and responsibilities of the CED | 2) Managing the county extension office            |
| 3) Budgeting and revenue enhancement     | 4) Educator vs. administrator: Finding the balance |
| 5) State/county policies and procedures  | 6) Supervising faculty and staff                   |
| 7) Organizational accountability         | 8) Establishing external linkages                  |
| 9) Available resources for CEDs          |  |

The Extension system does some amazing work; but all too often, we do not share across state lines and wind up reinventing the wheel! If your state Extension system could benefit from a similar program described here, please feel free to contact the author at [mattbenge@ufl.edu](mailto:mattbenge@ufl.edu) or (352) 294-1996.

#### Reference:

Sanders. C.B. 2014. Leadership competencies and needs of county Extension directors as perceived by county and district Extension directors and county administrators in Florida. Univ. of Fla. Dissertation, 189 pages; 3647865. (see abstract on p.11)



**Fig. 1.** County Extension Director Leadership Development Model (Sanders, 2014)

Dissertation abstract: Leadership competencies and needs of county Extension directors as perceived by county and district Extension directors and county administrators in Florida (Adapted from Sanders, 2014)

As the outreach component of the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), the Florida Cooperative Extension Service has an office in all sixty-seven counties in Florida. The county extension office operates under the supervision and leadership of a county Extension director (CED).

CEDs have sometimes begun their Extension careers without prior leadership training or experience or without a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The inadequate preparation of CEDs for effectively meeting the complex leadership challenges inherent to their positions needed to be addressed. A strong need to identify these leadership competencies has been ignored for too long. Hence, the leadership competencies needed by the CEDs to succeed must be identified.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to determine the leadership competencies as perceived by current CEDs, DEDs and county administrators in Florida. This study sought to determine the importance, knowledge, and competence of forty leadership competencies as perceived by CEDs. Additionally, this study examined the CED leadership competency needs based on the perceptions of CEDs and county administrators, using the Borich needs assessment model.

Findings suggested that the leadership competencies needed by CEDs include both human skills and conceptual skills. Also, the study revealed that effective CEDs are knowledgeable and proficient in a defined set of 40 leadership competencies. CED ratings based on importance/knowledge were highest for "conflict resolution," "saying no when warranted," "Extension marketing," "time management," and "creating a supportive work environment."

The implications and recommendations resulting from this research can be used to develop educational leadership training opportunities for CEDs. [The modules described above do so]



**"If you want something from me tomorrow,**

**You are creating a crisis for me. Tough...**

**If you want something in two months,**

**You are giving me a project. I can deliver!"**

**Mr. Bobby Crosby – County Administrator, Gilchrist County, FL**

## **Report on Obesity Released by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)**

Today, more than one in two adults and nearly one in six children are overweight or obese in the OECD area. The obesity epidemic has spread further in the past five years, although at a slower pace than before. Despite this, new projections show a continuing increase of obesity in all studied countries. Social disparities in obesity persist and have increased in some countries. A nearly tenfold variation in obesity and overweight rates can be seen across OECD countries. The full 2017 OECD report is accessible at: <http://www.oecd.org/health/health-systems/Obesity-Update-2017.pdf>

Obesity Update 2017

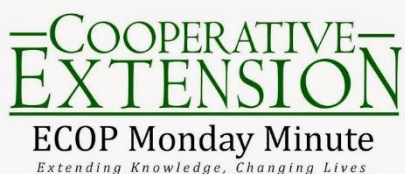


## **Food Sustainability Index - - A Global Study on Nutrition, Agriculture and Food Waste**

The Food Sustainability Index (FSI) I is a ranking of 25 countries on food system sustainability, and is a quantitative and qualitative benchmarking model, which includes Food Loss and Waste, Sustainable Agriculture, and Nutritional Challenges. Visit <http://foodsustainability.eiu.com> to see the complete report.



## **The Extension Committee on Organization and Policies (ECOP) Monday Minute Blog**



This news blog is meant to provide clear, consistent communications to the Board on Agriculture Assembly Cooperative Extension Section. Weekly updates appeal to the work of Cooperative Extension Directors and Administrators in the USA. Visit:

<http://ecopmondayminute.blogspot.com/2017/03/21.html>



### Virginia Cooperative Hires Two New Extension Directors: Welcome Janet and John to the SR MM Group!



On May 25, 2017 Janet Spencer ([jaashle2@vt.edu](mailto:jaashle2@vt.edu)) became the Southeast District Director for Virginia Cooperative Extension. The Southeast District is comprised of 30 counties and cities and is one of the most diverse districts in Virginia. Janet was the Unit Coordinator and

Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Isle of Wight County, Virginia. Before moving into the agent position in Isle of Wight County Janet served the Southeast District as the District Vegetable Production Agent at the Tidewater Agriculture Research and Extension Center. Janet has also served on the Southeast District Program Leadership Team and brings a wealth of Extension experience to the District Director position for the Southeast District. .

On May 25, 2017 John Thompson ([jthomp75@vt.edu](mailto:jthomp75@vt.edu)) became the Northern District Director for Virginia Cooperative Extension. The Northern District is comprised of



28 counties and cities and contains Virginia's most urban areas while having one of the largest agriculture producing regions in the state. John was the Unit Coordinator and Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Fluvanna County, Virginia. John also served as a 4-H Agent in Virginia. John was promoted to Senior Agent this year and served on the Northern District Program Leadership Team. John began his extension career in Mississippi as a 4-H Agent and brings a wealth of Extension experience to the District Director position for the Northern district.

## 10 MANAGEMENT TIPS FOR GREAT LEADERS

<b>Share information</b> Communicate the news that <b>you can</b> , so minds don't wander.	<b>Adjust your style</b> You have <b>many different communication styles and personalities</b> on your team. Don't think that you can manage everyone the same way, and don't assume everyone likes to be managed the way you like to be managed.	<b>Have fun</b> Your team wants to <b>enjoy going to work</b> . Play ten minutes!	<b>Raise your hand</b> When your people see you putting in extra hours, <b>they are inspired to jump in and follow your lead</b> .
<b>Say thanks</b> People want to feel <b>appreciated</b> ! A simple thank-you note <b>doesn't cost a thing</b> , and it <b>makes a huge difference</b> .	<b>Set small milestones</b> If you can't match last year's numbers, set <b>milestones that can be reached</b> .	<b>Remove obstacles</b> <b>Bureaucracy stifles creativity and innovation</b> . Cut down some of the paperwork.	<b>Focus your time</b> It's the old 80:20 principle. Focus the majority of your time and attention on the <b>20% of your people and projects that generate 80% of your results</b> .
<b>Empower through delegation</b> We know no one can do it as well as you can, <b>BUT you need to delegate</b> to give yourself time to <b>complete tasks</b> more appropriate for your level.	<b>Give feedback</b> Your direct reports want feedback, and it's <b>crucial in making your team as productive as possible</b> .		



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VACANT



## 2016 Southern Region Middle Manager Officers

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