



New Heights – Spring 2018

Southern Region Middle Managers Newsletter

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Mark Your Calendars: 2018 SR-PLN, AEA & ASRED Joint Meeting **August 20-24, 2018, Orlando, FL**



For the **preliminary program, pre-conference program, conference registration and hotel booking information**, please visit the SR-PLN site at: http://srpln.msstate.edu/pln/2018_srpln_conference.html

Early registration (\$370 for PLN only) ends July 15, 2018 and may be completed on-line at <https://register.extension.msstate.edu/2018-joint-meeting-pln-aea-asred>

Hotel reservations at The Florida Hotel and Conference Center, 1500 Sand Lake Rd., Orlando, FL 32809 must be made by individuals by calling the hotel directly at 1-800-588-4656. Room Block Code: SRED (\$129/night) for reservations made by July 23, 2018.

Hope to see you then!

PLN is just a few weeks out and we need your input on agenda items. Information is being compiled **NOW** for topics. Our time together is only as fruitful as we make it, so share your thoughts **TODAY**. Follow the survey link below:

[PLN- MM Committee Meeting Agenda - Survey](#)

**Less than One Year Away! Time to Become a Part of the Florida
MM2019 Conference: Volunteer or Nominate a Friend!**



1 - Val Aldnari



2 - Eric Simonne

In preparation to the MM 2019 conference to be held Monday April 22 to Thursday 25, 2019 at the Embassy Suite, Sarasota, FL, we need volunteers for the following committees:

- Program Development
- Educational Tours and Transportation
- Conference Communication
- Conference Program Evaluation



Share your ideas and thoughts for selecting a theme for the conference with Eric Simonne at esimonne@ufl.edu or Val at valkyrieshah@ufl.edu.

Thank you for stepping up!

National Urban Extension Leadership (NUEL) Update



3 - Brenda Rogers, Southwest District Extension Director, University of Florida (bgrogers@ufl.edu)

The NUEL Steering Committee, met May 6-8, 2018 in St. Louis, MO. Agenda highlights included: a Dissertation Overview by Marie Ruemenapp, Ph.D. candidate of her research focused on Urban Extension; preparations for the NUEL presentation at the National Extension Director's Association in Portland, OR in the fall; further development of Regional Caucuses and Action Teams; and work on the biennial National Urban Extension Conference scheduled for Seattle, WA May 20-23, 2019 <http://bit.do/NUEC19>.

The NUEL Southern Region & 1890's Caucus is scheduled for Chattanooga August 13-15, 2018. The Call for Proposals has been released and the tentative schedule can be found at <https://bit.ly/2HhqbRu>.

Southern Region Representatives are Michael Berry – Tennessee, Katherine Williams-North Carolina, and Brenda Rogers-Florida

Thinking about you and your family, Lonnie!



Please keep Lonnie Johnson and his wife in your thoughts and prayers. Lonnie's wife has undergone surgery which went well. She is now going through chemotherapy treatment. This is a challenging time for this family and I know they will appreciate all the prayers and support they can get.

Developing Collaborations with Nonprofit Organizations



4 - Jennifer A. Jones, Assistant Professor, Nonprofit Management and Leadership University of Florida, Dept. of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, jenniferajones@ufl.edu

There are more than one million 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in the United States, and these organizations are located in just about every community across the country. Collaborating with nonprofit organizations can generate revenue, improve your standing in the community, and increase your Extension program's overall impact.

If you're interested in developing collaborations between Extension and nonprofit organizations, ask yourself three questions:

1-Where are the common interests?

Where are the common interests between your Extension program and local nonprofit agencies? Nonprofits have a range of missions including: youth development, human services, health and health education, environment and animals, education, arts and culture, public and societal benefit, and more. Does your program line up with the mission of a youth development agency? A human services agency? An arts or cultural institution? You may need to be a little creative here as a "match" may not be immediately transparent. For example, a youth development agent might craft an interesting partnership with a museum or art agency.



5 - Master Gardener program often have common goals with those of nonprofits working on fighting food deserts and teaching residents how to grow their own food.

2-Where are the complementary skills?

Where can your skills complement the nonprofit organization's skills? For example, can your master gardeners help develop a community garden for a nonprofit that works with low income clients? Can your program delivery expertise complement a nonprofit's track record in client recruitment? It may take time to develop the relationship and find out where exactly your skills line up. Be patient.

3-Where can Extension add value?

Finally, what value can Extension add? Our strengths core strengths include curriculum design, program design, delivery, and evaluation. These all can be leveraged in fee-for-service relationships with nonprofit organizations or through collaborative grant proposals.

These three questions will help you identify where and how you can best collaborate with the nonprofits in your area. But remember—collaborations are mutually beneficial relationships. Take the time to develop relationships with nonprofit leaders and, overtime, creative and innovative opportunities will emerge.

For the complete results of a recent pilot study conducted in North Florida on existing partnerships between Extension and nonprofits, see our Journal of Extension article at <https://www.joe.org/joe/2018april/a3.php>

State Updates

Arkansas Update -Beth Phelps

With over one third of Arkansas's county agents having served 5 years or less, the current focus for district directors has been working with agents on building and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and political leaders at the state and local levels to maintain and increase funding for the Arkansas Division of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service.

Building Stakeholder Support is an In-service training to be conducted in May covering advocacy with our traditional funders – state and county government, as well as, looking at how to engage non-traditional funders – school boards, cities, local foundations and others. A few Arkansas County Extension teams have been successful in securing salary dollars from school boards, cities and local foundations. In Arkansas, we see success with non-traditional funders as critical moving forward.



6 - Jerry Clemons, Sharon Reynolds, & Beth Phelps

Georgia Update - Michael Martin

Two of our esteemed colleagues from UGA are retiring. **Tim Varnedore** is retiring July 31, 2018 with 30 + years of service to UGA Extension as Southwest District Extension Director. **Judy Ashley** is retiring on May 31, 2018 with 34+ years of service to UGA Extension as Northeast District Extension Director. These two fine individuals have dedicated their lives to Extension work, starting as County Extension Agents and working their way up to administration at the district level. We wish them success in their future endeavors. They will be missed by all the MM and those who worked with them!

Michael Martin, University of Georgia Extension, Director of Extension County Operations, 111 Conner Hall, Athens, GA 30602



7 - Judy Ashley



8 - Tim Varnedore

South Carolina Update - *Blake Lanford*

New Positions - The Clemson University Cooperative Extension System has had a successful year in the area of “new hires”. We were able to secure money from the South Carolina General Assembly to hire: Three specialists with specialties in Food Safety, Agribusiness, and 4-H Equine; Two Area Agents in Agribusiness and Agriculture; Three 4-H County Agents; and, Ten Administrative Assistants.

Current Searches - We are currently searching for two Forestry Specialists, three County Agents in 4-H and one Livestock Specialist- 4-H. We were able to add an additional \$500 dollars travel to each county agent’s budget and make \$1 million improvements to the T. Ed Garrison Livestock Arena. Currently we have a \$4.2 million request in for 2018-2019 for water programs, Pinckney 4-H Leadership Program, 1 – School Garden Specialist, 4-H Agents as well as County Agents in several specialty areas.

Rural Health - This new initiative is piloted in a few target counties in South Carolina. CU Extension and MUSC are collaborating to deliver new health and wellness programs through Extension Services in Anderson, Barnwell, and Williamsburg Counties. In these counties, a new "Health Extension Agent" will be hired (one per county). The health Extension Agent will be responsible for coordinating four health programs in each county that will be aimed at 1) combating childhood obesity, 2) promoting cancer

screenings, 3) promoting treatment for opioid addiction, and 4) combating infant mortality. Dr. Michelle Parisi is leading the initiative in Extension and will be creating and distributing program fact sheets that can be given out to agents and community members. These will aim to answer common questions that may arise about these programs.

Rural Water - Extension has been asked by the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, SC Farm Bureau, SC Department of Natural Resources, and SC Department of Health and Environmental Control to conduct an Agricultural Water Use Survey for South Carolina. This survey will be the first step in developing a five-year water use plan for SC. We are currently developing a water resource division for Extension and Research.

Communicating Intentionally with your Remote Employees



9 - Jeff Young, Director of County Operations, University of Kentucky, Cooperative Extension Service (Jeffery.young@uky.edu)

Let's face it "open and honest communication" is almost as important to our employees as wages, benefits, and advancement opportunities. According to a recent *LinkedIn* article titled "Communication and Culture: The Keys to Retention", employees are looking for a "supportive culture" and "a climate of honesty, nurtured through consistent, highly efficient communication..."

These are lofty expectations for Extension middle managers whose employees are scattered through many counties. There are just not enough hours in the day to connect face-to-face to everyone we are responsible for on a regular basis.

Extension middle managers are part of a new, growing remote workforce. Whether working from a home office, hotel, or vehicle, we are faced with growing challenges to past methods of performing our management roles. These challenges are most likely to grow as the percentage of the U.S. workforce working remotely is expected to soon exceed 43% (Entrepreneur).

There are several technologies that most (if not all) of us have at our disposal as middle managers to address both employees' desires for "open and honest communication" and the realities of remote management. Here are a few:



10 - Email

Email is most popular communication but widely considered the least effective. The reason could be the sheer volume of email sent. It is estimated that "over 300 BILLION emails are sent each day and that the average business person now gets over 100 per day" (Friedman). To avoid being overwhelmed and overlooked, Friedman shares "8 Tips for Effective Email Communication".

1. Be clear and concise with your message, using bulleted points when possible
2. Always re-read your message before sending and double/triple check for grammar and spelling
3. Copy back key points when replying. Remember your reader is getting 100's of emails a day and may not remember the conversation.
4. Use SPECIFIC subject line descriptions. Email conversations can go on for weeks, so help the reader know what to expect.
5. Realize that once a message is sent it's hard to recall. It's possible to ruin a career with a poorly written email.
6. Practice the 24 -hour rule when upset. Never send email when you are angry. Wait 24 hours!
7. Avoid abbreviations and short cuts in business emails. Common shortcuts like LOL and OMG are too casual for business communication.

8. Don't forward "Viral" messages. I think this one goes without saying, but it seems there are still some otherwise intelligent people who will fall for a hoax.



11 - Texting

Although not as popular as email, texting can be a very important business tool. The primary reason is that "90% of text messages are read within 10 minutes and people will look at their phones 150 times a day" (Mesio.com). In addition, new apps like "**Poll Everywhere**" expand on the ease and comfort most people associate with texting.



12 - Virtual Face to Face

The better alternative to constant emailing for remote managers can be regular short video conferences. Several technologies are available to you at little or no cost and one that's probably within arm's reach. Your personal digital device (cell phone) probably has "Face Time" or video conference capability built in. Of course, the screen is small, but it adds another dimension to our employee communications.

Most universities own site licenses to **Zoom** or **Skype**. These are great tools and most of us have used them to conduct group meeting or professional development, but they can also be just as effective in meeting the communication and feedback needs of our employees. These meetings can also be easily recorded and shared if necessary.

Many social media providers have live video feed features. These can be excellent ways to meet, share ideas and can also be saved for future playback.

So, as we begin another busy day as Extension middle managers, remember the needs of your employees for honest, open and timely communication, and also remember that there are new ways to communicate and gather feedback, while managing your time in more efficient ways.

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Blake's Magical Solution for Work Life Balance



13 - Blake Lanford, Clemson University District Extension Director - Coastal District (blakel@clemson.edu)

How often do you think about the concept of “work life balance”?

How often do your agents and employees encounter considerations thereof? It seems that any public service career is prone to issues with such balance - not that it's exclusive to that sector by any means. I might not always think of difficulties employees experience in managerial terms, but I know there's an issue that I need to get my head wrapped around rather quickly. Part of me thinks that you don't know that you have a problem until it's too late. Another part of me thinks that there are boundaries that you can enforce in management of your own behaviors that will help avoid problems. *I can hear my mother reinforcing the idea that I can't control behaviors of those around me, but I can certainly control my own as I write...*

As I'm sure is the case with many Extension counterparts, I spend quite a bit of time on the road. Lately I've been listening to podcasts as an alternative to the news cycle or a bad radio signal. One episode recently caught my attention, partly because I've heard the speaker before, partly because it just happened to be at the top of the heap. Anyway, the podcast is called ***WorkLife with Adam Grant***. An introduction to the series reads as follows: **You spend a quarter of your life at work, so shouldn't you enjoy it? Organizational psychologist Adam Grant takes you inside some of the world's most unusual workplaces to discover the keys to better work. Whether you're learning how to love criticism or trust a co-worker you can't stand, one thing's for sure: You'll never see your job the same way again.**



14 - *When Work Takes Over Your Life* - I listened to the Podcast directly from Google Play Music

Over the course of listening I was introduced to the concept of segmentors and integrators. These two classifications help define your identity in the work place. As with most behaviors, people fall on a spectrum between complete separation of their identities at work and outside of work and those that blend their identities. I tend to believe that at times I've been more a segmentor and less an integrator, but I also know that the posture I assume is largely defined by the role I maintain in the organization and where I see myself in my career and life in general. I understand I'm engaged in this constant manipulation of my response to the work life world in the ultimate search for ideal "sweet spot".

So, what does any of this have to do with being a Cooperative Extension administrator? First, if I struggle with these issues, chances are my colleagues at various stages of their Extension careers do as well. Second, I **may** be well positioned to help employees navigate these issues and third, the realization of struggle alone should temper my daily interactions to those with whom I maintain some measure of empathetic communication. Turns out I don't have any magical solutions and it doesn't seem that anyone else does either, but at a minimum, it's on my radar and that's a start!

The Word From Our 1862 Administrative Advisor

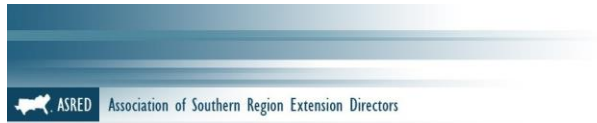


15 - Rick Cartwright, University of Arkansas, rcartwright@uaex.edu

We held the ASRED (Southern Region Extension Directors) meeting in Alabama the week of April 16 and had a wide-ranging and robust discussion. I mention the following for your awareness of regional happenings.

Dr. Doug Steele, Director of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, stepped down on April 19 to serve in a new role as Director of International Outreach and Extension Education for the Norman E. Borlaug Institute at Texas A&M. All of us wish nothing but the best for Dr. Steele in this new role. Dr. Parr Rosson, Dept. Head of Ag Economics at Texas A&M has been appointed as Interim Head of the Extension Service until a national search for a permanent replacement is completed.

Dr. Damona Doye was selected recently to serve as Associate Vice President and Director of the Extension Service for Oklahoma State University. Dr. Doye comes from a long career of service as Regents Professor and Extension Economist at Oklahoma State. We certainly welcome her and wish Dr. Doye the best in the years to come.



Extension budgets continue to be tight across the region with improvement in a few states. It is always enlightening to realize the similarity of issues for the states in the Southern Region when it comes to Extension and Land Grant Universities work.

Issues or opportunities coming you should be conscious of include:

- A potential new approach to nutrition education and funding at the federal level – pay attention to the ongoing evolution of the Farm Bill with regard to Snap-Ed and EFNEP – this change could be huge, if realized.
- An effort to improve Civil Dialogue on Race Relations led by the Southern Rural Development Center and Rachel Welborn – stay tuned.
- A continuing discussion as to how we can improve visibility and impact of Extension. Expect further conversation on these matters at the PLN meeting in August in Orlando. Related to this, there was some discussion on how to improve and better utilize the National Impact Database and work more closely on reporting with NIFA. Remember the PLN Preconference training on the National Impacts Database, Monday, August 20, 2018 at 1:30-4:30 pm CT - Cost: \$40 – at the PLN Meeting in Orlando, FL.
- More work coming on opioid addiction and its perils, with leadership from the North Central Region Rural Development Center.
- More work coming on industrial hemp and its associated products with research and development occurring in several states – Kentucky and North Carolina appear to be among the better resources for understanding this complex issue and there remain many challenges to work through.
- Please be aware of your social media policies and practices and stay ahead of changing trends and issues – this communication has very powerful potential for both good and bad, as you know, but we need to stay attuned to what we are doing in our organizations over time.

There were many other items covered at the meeting, but I thought these would be of most interest to our group – we can discuss in more detail at our next conference call if desired.

Thank you for your leadership and hard work.

The Power of Positive Youth Development Through Cheyenne's and Steven's Stories



16 - Jack Payne, UF/IFAS Senior Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources (jackpayne@ufl.edu; @JackPayneIFAS)



Our youth find in 4-H a safe place to learn, grow, and be themselves.

Cheyenne Duncan was a fast-rising 4-H star in Walton County, Florida. Then, her freshman year of high school happened.

While she was 14, her parents divorced, she was bullied at school, her father was deployed, and she was in an abusive relationship. Her prize-winning goat died. Her show horse got injured and could no longer compete. Things were bad. Her 4-H agent Jena Brooks Gilmore encouraged Cheyenne's mom to send her to Camp Timpoochee as a junior camp counselor.

Maybe it was the week away. Maybe it was the opportunity to lead. Maybe it was that she learned what it was like to be admired by other kids again instead of bullied. Maybe it was the presence of a caring adult. By the end of the week, Cheyenne had a tear-filled heart-to-heart conversation with Gilmore. Just the two of them on a camp bench. And Cheyenne said, "This 4-H stuff really works! I can be myself here, really my true self, and everyone is OK with that."



Steven Lommerse is now 18. He reads the labels of orange juice cartons to make sure that what he's drinking is from Florida. He whips out his iPhone to show off Instagram photos of his own citrus trees.

Steven is the president of the Florida 4-H Council. He's the lead voice for more than 200,000 Floridian youth. When Steven and I met at a 4-H fund-raiser, he had a container with a young Persian lime tree in it. He placed it in the dining hall as if planting a flag. He was putting down a marker to tell the attendees that there are people his age who believe in citrus. When he spoke, he talked about prospects for a genetically modified HLB-resistant rootstock. He talked about making a career in citrus production.

What made me believe in his vision of the future, though, was his motivation. Steven doesn't grow trees for the money. He has a passion.

Everywhere throughout the country, 4-H improves our youth – one child at a time. Keep up the good work!

2018 Quarterly Zoom and phone call: Number and dates

Note new call number for 2018: (605) 468-8029 (Access code remains 911522#)

June 14th, 2018

July 12th, 2018

Archives and direct links to recent on-line issues (other issues accessible at [SRPLN - MM Website](#) as posted)

[New Heights - Fall 2017](#)

[New Heights -Spring 2018](#)

2018 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, Associate Vice-President for Agricultural Extension, University of Arkansas

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