

Reflections on the First *Galaxy* Conference

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The first JCEP appointed committee met in December 1991 in Chicago, Illinois. Four representatives from each association at the time (NEAFCS, NAE4-HA, NACAA and ESP) served on the Steering Committee. Our goals for the first meeting were to develop a name for the conference (*Galaxy Summit Conference* 1997), theme (*Mission Possible: Uniqueness With Unity*), suggested locations (San Antonio, Texas and Cincinnati, Ohio) date (September or October) and Mission Statement ("The *Galaxy Conference* will provide Extension professionals with the opportunity to strengthen the Cooperative Extension Service by building the concepts of teamwork, new working relationships, and a base for interdisciplinary programs which address current and emerging issues while allowing associations to recognize peers and conduct business.")

STEERING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Chair - Donna J. Mac Neir, NAE4-HA
Co-Chair - Patricia Powley, ESP
Secretary - Joanne Hamilton, NEAFCS
Treasurer - Richard Freeman, NAE4-HA
Marketing Committee
Facilities Committee
Finance Committee
Association Business Committee
Educational Program Committee

Each member of the steering committee had committed him/herself to the production of a quality conference by volunteering to serve on a subcommittee.

The Steering Committee requested JCEP to support a committee meeting for conference planning in Chicago in December 1992 and 1993, which was granted. The Facilities Committee was to select a site from the bids received. The only bid received was from Ohio, with support of Indiana and Kentucky, to be held in Cincinnati. The committee and JCEP accepted the bid.

As the Steering Committee met each year, the members of the committee had a few changes over the years from 1991-1997. Patricia Powley became the chair of the conference (always with her soft spoken voice managing to keep the group under control.) Joanne Hamilton, secretary, always had a way about keeping us on track, while taking minutes on her laptop. Richard Freeman collected all proposed budgets from participating associations to plan a budget with the finance committee for our 1997 *Galaxy Conference*. Our goal was to break even!

After selection of the site, John Keeton (IN) and Pete Lane (OH) joined the *Galaxy* Committee. I was already on the committee representing NEAFCS and Kentucky.

During 1993-1995, the subcommittees worked hard to answer questions of participating associations as well as setting goals and timelines for the committees to function. While in Orlando in December 1994, seven members saw Disney World on Saturday evening from 8:00 PM to 1:00 AM. What an experience! Joanne knew how to get six extra tickets for her family (Extension) from across the U.S.A.

In 1996 the Steering Committee met with JCEP in Cincinnati, Ohio to review the site, but 14-inches of snow fell after our arrival. Cincinnati was shut down for two days due to a severe snow storm. One of those evenings we dined at a steakhouse within the hotel because everything else was closed. Our committee could have bought a whole steer for the price of our total dinner. (Expenses were per diem; extra costs were out of *our* pockets.) The meeting in January, 1996 was convened by Patricia Powley: "This meeting is a very crucial one to begin the process of developing a very meaningful conference for the Cooperative Extension System. Teamwork is of vital importance." Our committee had finally changed for the last time. These were the members who would complete this goal except for Joan McGarvy NEAFCS who died in April, 1997, leaving a physical void on our committee; however, her commitment to the *Galaxy Summit* lived on in the conference. While the snow was falling, the committee toured Cincinnati.

The Steering Committee planned (a few samples):

- Friendship Event in the evening at the Museum Center in Cincinnati Union Terminal.
- Opening sessions sponsored by Indiana Association "Extension Family Reunion."
- Blast-Off Leadership Breakfast sponsored by Proctor & Gamble with all association leaders invited.
- Educational Tours - sponsored by Kentucky, Ohio and Indiana. Examples of Historic preservation and antiques (OH), The German Corner (IN) and Extension Offices of the '90's (KY) - featuring lunch at my office built in 1996.
- Grand Finale Awards Banquets and Ice Cream Social by Regions

The budget was developed by anticipating attendance of 1,750 and charging \$225 registration fee for the conference. The committee set guidelines in 1992 for profit/loss of conference. Profit: 50% to host states, 50% to partner associations. Losses, if any, would be shared by the partner associations. With profit, Kentucky paid part of association's membership dues and provided funds for awards. Examples of often asked questions:

- Is the seed money a loan or an investment?
- Call for proposals - How will the proposals be selected with equal representation among associations?
- Is there a budget draft #9?
- How do you involve members from the four associations in *Galaxy*?

- Cost of booth space, who has contracts with potential exhibitors?

All of these questions continued to be asked as members of association boards changed.

In 1997, Ray Corey (ME) brought lobster from Maine which was prepared for the *Galaxy* Steering Committee by Kentucky Extension Homemaker Volunteers and served at the Boone County Extension Office, Kentucky. What a wonderful treat!

Finally, October 12-16, 1997 arrived. The *Galaxy Summit* registration had exceeded the committee's expectations with 2,419 Extension professionals participating in the first *Galaxy Conference*. All the events, speakers, concurrent sessions, exhibits, even the awards program was successful. I remember the committee meeting during the ice cream social and celebrating "It was a Success, We Did It". Several committee members attended *Galaxy II* in Salt Lake City, Utah and this was the first time we had seen each other since 1997.

Now, ten years later, many of the original Steering Committee members have retired, although a few of us still work for the Cooperative Extension System. The six years spent serving on the Steering Committee passed quickly, but many hours, days, weeks and months of hard work and dedication went into making the first *Galaxy Summit Conference* a success. It had paid off though. Everyone joined together to make the conference better than any of us ever dreamed. The teamwork and the relationships we formed over the years will always be cherished.

It will be great to participate in the third *Galaxy Conference* in Indianapolis, Indiana. Diane Baker, chair for 2008 was one of our younger committee members during that first *Galaxy Conference*. It will be good to see other Extension family members this September.

I want to end with a quote Donna Donald sent at the end of the *Galaxy* work. "May we do what we can each day, as impeccably as possible, and then be at peace - for the results are out of our hands."