

2013 Public Issues Leadership Development Conference

Letters from NEAFCS Scholarship Recipients

I learned so much at the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference last week. I have worked in Extension for 15 years, but had never really thought about how important it was to let our elected officials know what we do in Extension daily, and how we should thank them often for all the support we get from our Federal, State and County Government. Kentucky has an Extension Office in all 120 counties and we need to thank these great elected officials for helping us to continue with this strong support in our states.

Thank you to NEAFCS for awarding me a scholarship to help with my expenses to PILD. I appreciate it very much.

I attended all sessions, including the NEAFCS meeting, and listened to the PILD 101 webinar. We had our state ESP meeting during the actual webinar, so I listened to it later.

Edith M. Lovett, Kentucky

I am a relative newcomer to Extension with 6 years as a County Agent. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference. This conference helped to fit all the pieces of the Extension puzzle together. One of the speakers who really helped the pieces click together was Laura Kalambokidis. Her presentation "You CAN Understand and Effectively Communicate the Public Value of Cooperative Extension" helped me to understand the Public Value of what we do. We know that we are making an impact on the lives of those who participate in our programs. Our programs also have a value to those who do not directly benefit from the program. Across the board, Extension programs can foster changes in social, economic, environmental, or civic conditions, improved water quality, reduced public health costs, greater economic vitality and resilience, higher property values, lower taxes, lower crime rates, more effective leadership. Being able to talk about the public value of our programs is most important when interpreting our programs to stakeholders and funders.

Dianne Gertson, Texas

As a first time attendee to PILD, I am truly thankful for the NEAFCS scholarship and the opportunity to attend the conference in Alexandria, Virginia. This was a unique opportunity to hear from experienced advocates and others involved in the process as well as to gain an understanding of effective communication processes for meeting with legislators. Hearing from other state representation raised my awareness of the similarity of issues facing Extension nationwide. A true highlight of the conference was meeting with our National Program Leader who provided valuable, insightful information for future issues and opportunities related to our scope of work.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend.

Jill N. Cox, Pennsylvania

The Public Issues and Leadership Development Conference I attended last week did make a lasting impact on me and my programming. When we were first asked to write this report I thought I had learned some interesting facts and gathered good information on expressing Extension's value to public officials

from the day's speakers. I especially liked the presentation on "public value" and plan to include that kind of information in my reports, impact statements, etc. on a regular basis. The speaker presented the information in a method that explained to me, a concept I had not quite captured.

Spending an entire day on Capitol Hill visiting with Nebraska's Representatives and Senators and their staff members was an interesting and enlightening experience. From the Nebraska Breakfast at 7:30, to our last meeting with Senator Deb Fischer at 4:30, our team of four University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educators was treated with respect and high regard by the elected officials and their staff. I will no longer be hesitant to provide information or speak out on issues at meetings across Nebraska and other forums held by our elected officials. The true lasting impact of the 2013 PILD Conference will be a more informed Extension Educator that is willing to share and promote the public value of Extension programming to any decision-maker, whether it be at the local, state or national level.

Susan Pearman, Nebraska

Thank you for the support that allowed me to attend the PILD (Public Issues Leadership Development - JCEP- conference April 21 to the 24th). It was a wonderful experience to meet colleagues, administrators and volunteers from all over the nation. The impact of Cooperative Extension nationally is huge. The organization as a whole has had challenges about communicating the information and impact to their legislators and constituents. It was interesting to see the way other states are addressing this challenge. The idea of looking at Cooperative Extension programs as a proactive approach in reducing spending elsewhere is exciting.

What I learned is that it is important that legislators are contacted in their local offices as well as Washington, DC. We need to communicate a consistent message with branding and do it often (but not so much as to overwhelm, maybe quarterly). We need to show impact not just numbers. It is important to have a "what happened because I attended the extension event" story. Whether it is your own or one a coworker experienced, it need to be a true story told in detail. Having unprecedented access to NIFA national program leaders gave me a confidence that the grant application process could end in success. I am looking forward to the Galaxy conference in September to continue conversations with my colleagues, catalyzed by PILD.

Debra Boyd, Pennsylvania

The most important take home message I learned from attending the 2013 PILD conference was how much power and influence there is in each individual in Cooperative Extension. Simply knowing your story and telling your story leads to great opportunities and success. Whether we are talking with elected government officials, other critical stakeholders, or documenting our work for promotion and tenure; we all must communicate the public value of Cooperative Extension.

Story's tend to communicate this value better than numbers. The message communicated at PILD was that in Extension there is time and place for number document our impacts however, most of those stakeholders that must understand our public value impacts will relate and respond best to our grassroots experiences. Stories can easily be incorporated into our stump speeches, websites, blogs, local newspaper articles, and presentations to county councils.

Lastly, our experience at Capitol Hill on Wednesday was very enlightening. We learned that our senators have not been receiving any FCS impacts from our state and were able to establish lines of communication for the future. Telling our stories to our Senator's professional staffers was a great experience but listening to them tell us what we can do to be more involved was just as valuable.

I will be able to take this information back to our state and help each of our FCS Extension Educators improve their efforts to tell their stories and be sure their impacts reach the key stakeholders that directly impact Cooperative Extension in our state and across the country.

Amanda Christensen, Vermont

Public Issues Leadership Development Conference 2013

Every time I attend a national conference where every association in Extension is present, more of the pieces of the Extension Puzzle fall into place for me. And, attending the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference was no different; it was a tremendous experience for me. The speakers readily prepared me and my state's delegation for our visits to Capitol Hill. They were enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and totally involved with the issue at hand, both in transferring the message of what points needed to be presented as well as the importance of why we were there attending the conference.

PILD allowed me to reconnect with contacts from previous conferences as well as make new ones. It not only provided a meeting place for those that deliver Extension services to the stakeholders around the country, but an arena to share and strengthen Extension's Public Value. Each association is one part of the Extension Puzzle. Members of each association, coming together, being given the opportunity to deliver the important message of what Extension means to stakeholders and the significance of each program area to our legislators, but coming together as one to relay the crucial message of the need to continue to support Extension as a valuable public service through adequate funding and support. I am currently enrolled in my last class this semester, and will be finishing my specialization in Leadership Development and Management. This conference was an incredible experience for me; it has helped me to put into practice many of the aspects, principles, and theories that I have been learning about in my specialization classes. I am very grateful for having been given the opportunity to attend, and I would hope to attend another in the future.

Thank you to NEAFCS for providing funds that helped to defray the some of the cost of registration to attend!

Robin B. Landry, Louisiana

Public Issues Leadership Development Conference: What You Can Do was a very informative and eye opening conference. It helped me understand the importance of networking with elected officials at the local, state, and national level. Each speaker built a road for you to follow as you planned your visit to Capitol Hill on Wednesday. I gained knowledge on building partnerships, resources, and strategies for communication. One thing a speaker stressed to us was to be upbeat and positive, keeping it clear, No Jargon!, tell the stories, focus on impacts and public value of the federal investment during our visit with officials on the Hill. This was great because you don't have much time to make your point. The conference helped us effectively tell the story of Cooperative Extension and public value. The conference gave you the opportunity to apply the knowledge, improve government relationships and provided us opportunities in personal growth. I now have a better understanding of PILD and learned many ways to strengthen Cooperative Extension which is critical for our future.

I want to thank NEAFCS for providing a scholarship and the opportunity to attend PILD.

Susan Howington, Georgia

As a first-time attendee to PILD, I honestly expected to be more of a spectator than a participant. But being an Extension educator for 18 years should have taught me better than that! My head is still reeling from all the knowledge I gained in the three days spent at PILD. It equipped me to assist my co-workers to think about the total Extension program and how our programs affect one another. I learned that it's important to have a good understanding of all Extension programs & their goals so that when the opportunity to talk to policy makers arrives (and it will) you can do so succinctly and confidently. Extension programs are a good dollar for dollar value. The real challenge is improving our evaluation systems to show what our true impact is on the people we serve.

Leslie Workman, Kentucky

As a first-time PILD attendee, I was unsure of what to expect. The conference was eye-opening and gave much-needed insight into how other states keep their Extension programs running smoothly. I would highly recommend it for any Extension professional with an interest in learning more about how to effectively work with stakeholders and elected officials. The state legislative visits were, in my opinion, the highlight of the PILD experience. Thank you so much for providing this scholarship opportunity!

Terri Black, Georgia

What I received from my participation at the Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) conference

This conference was very enlightening in many ways. The overall focus on preparing us for our visits on Capitol Hill was good, but there was so much more that I gleaned from the meeting.

- While I knew that the % of the population who were on the farm was greatly reduced from when I was a kid, I did not know that today 98% of the population does not live on the farm or that we are now TWO generations away from the time when the majority of people were on farm.
- The concept that 'We are ALL local' is something I had not thought about much, but I think it's very important for us to show the public value of what we do and how it is connected to the larger enterprise of government and the economy.
- Extension will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2014 – just a few months from now! I think there may be many opportunities for us to use this event to promote the importance and public value of Cooperative Extension!
- I didn't know about the JCEP Teamwork award! Hearing about the recipient's project (the Intergenerational Land Transfer program) was very inspirational and spoke well of the type of work we do that really no one else does (or they charge an arm and a leg for it).
- Laura Kalambokidis' presentation gave me a lot to think about in terms of how we are communicating about our programs. Definitely individuals in the programs benefit and we describe their benefits very well. We probably don't do nearly as well describing to our county officials WHY they should fund the programs we do.
- Dr. Marshall Stewart's presentation was enjoyable and informative. I particularly liked his line ... when asked where he stands on an issue he says 'some of my friends are for it and some of my friends are against it, and I am with my friends.'
- The discussion of our visits to Capitol Hill and subsequent planning time with my one colleague who was at PILD – this block convinced me that we need to get more organized in my state and prepare farther in advance of attending so we can have our talking points better pulled together and those of us who attend are more knowledgeable about how to talk with staffers and elected officials.

- The time we spent as an NEAFCS group was very valuable. The exercise of reviewing the Impact Statement drafts was very good!!! I had drafted one of them, and after that session felt I could have done a much better job. I wish I'd had that session BEFORE I'd done my draft!!
- The Breakfast sessions were excellent. I appreciated the opportunity to visit with the Program Leaders/National Staff and to hear from them as well as to share my local concerns and needs.
- The FCS Extension Marketing session was excellent. I got a great idea that I can implement in my county, and my County Director likes it too. Now to find the time (figure out what I might be able to drop to make time) to get it done!

So I've written more than a paragraph and I haven't even addressed all the sessions or all that I got out of any of them. I got a lot of great information, ideas, and inspiration and look forward to putting it into practice!

Books to read:

Start with WHY: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action
The Secret Language of Grassroots Leadership: Storytelling

Cathy Martinez
Arizona

I appreciate the scholarship opportunity provided by NEAFCS to offset the costs to attend the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference in April. This was a truly enlightening experience and helped me to learn more about engaging (in advocacy).

As I have very limited experience working with my elected officials, this conference really taught me how to engage in public policy and the legislative process, on a national, state and local level. I will be attending a county council meeting soon and will be sure to share the value of Extension and Family and Consumer Sciences.

I have already told the Maryland delegation that I am willing to join them for Hill visits next year. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me, 410-313-2707, or via email, mbr@umd.edu.

Mia B. Russell
Maryland

I'm grateful to receive the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference scholarship. Being a first timer, I didn't know what to expect from the conference and was happy to receive useful and insightful information that is helpful to me as Extension Agent.

The knowledge I gained on how to tell our story to decision makers was the most useful. Stories are a powerful tool to advocate for Extension. Great storytelling is a symbol of effective leadership. Your story should be simple, positive, and true. I was able to develop my very own Extension advocacy story and will share my story with local, state, and federal officials. Each session I attended build upon the next which gave me the take home message of advocacy. I know now I can help make a difference with elected stakeholders.

Again, thank you for this opportunity.

Tawnya Crockett
Mississippi

I would like to take this opportunity to send a thank you to the National Association of Family and Consumer Sciences for the scholarship I have received to attend the Public Issues Leadership Development Conference (PILD).

As a first time attendee, I learned the value and importance of not only starting the Extension conversation with our elected officials but developing a lasting relationship with them. I enjoyed being able to spend time with my colleagues in Tennessee from across disciplines and discuss the many ways that we can work together to make sure that Extension is visible to these important people who need to support Extension. I learned the importance of making sure that I am aware of the issues my state deals with related to funding and other areas. I enjoyed meeting with the senators and representatives from the great state of Tennessee and look forward to honing the relationship that I developed during the PILD conference.

As the President of the Tennessee Affiliate of NEAFCS, once again I would like to thank you for this opportunity. Please let me know if you need further information.

Shelly Barnes, Tennessee

Being a part of the 2013 PILD conference has taught me the importance of keeping our message simple, clear and free of jargon. I have learned the importance of planning with the public value in mind and framing our message in such a way those individuals who do not directly benefit from our programs may understand what we do. I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the important role we play in impacting the economy, education and health. I have learned that extension, as an organization is able to touch every facet of an individual's life through researched based educational program. As I move forward in my extension I was reminded that evaluation is an important component of our program.

Tameka Mendez, Indiana

The 2013 PILD Conference theme was "What You CAN Do!". There were a variety of speakers and breakout sessions that provided information and expertise in all of the program areas. I was particularly interested in Dr. Marshall Stewart, Associate Director for North Carolina State University and his presentation on *You CAN Make a Difference with Elected Stakeholders*. Dr. Stewart discussed the guiding principles for understanding and communication public value as 3 Know's and 3 Be's. The 3 Knows are: Know who you are, Know who you are talking to, and Know what is important to them. The Be's are: Be Flexible, Be Relentless, and Be Honest. Dr. Stewart also added that it is equally important for us to know the stakeholders and for the stakeholders to know us. This information is relevant to our

University's mission of sharing Extension's public value and can be easily shared and implemented within our state association.

Jessica Trussell, Missouri

I recently attended the PILD Conference and it was a very enlightening experience. I truly enjoyed the chance to meet with Extension Educators from other states to learn of their successful programming and in some instances, their challenges and concerns. I plan to continue to correspond with some of them. The conference speakers were excellent! Of course the day on the Hill was a highlight. We met with staffers and they were attentive and had questions for us. We were well prepared and enjoyed the opportunity to share Extension's story. I definitely will use this experience to better promote Extension programs in my own state of Oklahoma.

I loved Hello Dolly! Thank you so much for the NEAFCS Scholarship; it was an amazing experience to attend PILD.

Ranel Lasley, Oklahoma

This was my first time attending the PILD Conference. The conference exceeded my expectations, personally and professionally. I learned about the importance of understanding how to effectively communicate with elected officials and decision makers. I was able to develop a stump speech and an elevator speech, in preparation for future opportunities to talk with leaders about how important Extension's programs and education are for the citizens across the state of Minnesota. The session that impacted me the most was the *Secret Language of Grassroots Leadership*, this session helped me to really think about all of the personal stories that I can share, and about how meaningful storytelling can be.

In addition to learning about how Extension works at the Federal level, I was enriched personally as well. Something that has stayed with me since the conference is the new understanding and appreciation I have for our legislators that in fact they are people just like me, and that they genuinely care about what is happening in our state and with our communities and families we work with.

Thank you for the support; I greatly appreciated the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful conference.

Jennifer Garbow, Minnesota