

## 2012 Reports from PILD Scholarship Recipients

*Suzanne Weltman (PA)*

As a first-time PILD attendee, my initial encounter was that of entering an entirely new world of acronyms: NIFA, IYFC, ECOP, DFCS, CES, to name a few. Was there a glossary available somewhere for a newbie?

Fortunately, things became clearer as the day progressed. Thanks to Caroline Crocoll, Acting Assistant Director of the Institute of Youth, Family & Community (IYFC) under NIFA, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the NPL (National Program Leader) for FCS (Family Consumer Sciences), I gained a solid understanding of Extension's organizational structure within the USDA. Speaking in a small group setting, Caroline made us feel at ease knowing that IYFC is available to us as a resource for our work in Extension.

"All politics is local," commented Douglas Steels, Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP), and Director of Extension at Montana State University, which brought home the lobbying basics for me: come up with a "hook," or notable message, request or raise funds if applicable and communicate thanks throughout the process.

Listening to Marshall Stewart, Associate Director North Carolina State University, I learned three critical points to communicate with stakeholders, whether at a local, state or federal level, namely, economic impact, education opportunities for constituents and overall impact on health and wellness.

I gained valuable insight in how to build, maintain and strengthen legislative relationships, lessons that could easily be applied to other Extension partnership efforts, in part by selecting the appropriate tools, medium and message.

For me, the highlight of my PILD experience was visiting Capitol Hill and the US Senate building, where PEAFCs colleague Lynn James and I paid a visit to the office of Senator Bob Casey. Having already distilled and organized our talking points in preparation for our meeting, we delivered our message to legislative aide Maureen O'Dea, requesting continued support for state agriculture and education programs. The well-informed aide quickly assured us that Senator Casey was indeed responsive to the state Extension budget, funded in part by the Smith Lever 3(b)-3(c) appropriation, in addition to the Farm bill.

As a result of tips acquired during my PILD breakout sessions, I went on to inquire how we could best maintain contact with the Senator's office.

The constructive reply? 1. share personal stories (both challenges and successes); 2. be in touch with one or more of the Senator's seven offices throughout the state, and 3. inform them when we start new programs. Consider inviting our legislative representatives to tour new programs or to visit a class site. Describe how things actually look in the field, something they rarely have time to observe, describe how funds are being spent, especially after lobbying efforts.

Our meeting concluded, we were encouraged to take samples of Pennsylvania-manufactured candy displayed in Senator Casey's reception area, among them, Goldberg Peanut Chews.

It made for an overall sweet finish to my first Public Issues Leadership Development Conference learning experience, fortifying me with solid ideas that I can bring into my work as Extension educator, Nutrition Links supervisor and active NEAFCS/PEAFCS member.

*Debra DeRossitte (AR) Affiliate President-Elect*

The PILD Conference was an amazing experience for me! I gained so much, not only from the speakers /presenters, but also from the delegates from other states. This was a great opportunity to connect with the national leadership for NEAFCS and the national program leaders for NIFA. One definition of education is "to change". That being said, the conference indeed altered some of my perspectives. I would definitely recommend the PILD experience to others.

*Lynn James (PA), Affiliate President-Elect*

I am writing to express my thanks for the PILD scholarship award from NEAFCS. At the JCEP PILD conference, I found both Dr. Steele and Dr. Edward's presentations prepared me well to discuss the funding issues and implications for Extension. The three key issues of economy, education and healthcare certainly helped me and my co-worker frame our discussion around our programs with Senator Bob Casey's staff member on Wednesday. We especially centered on the sequestration issue, and the devastating funding implications that would have for our programs. We knew that Senator Casey sits on the Agriculture appropriations committee, and found out he is very supportive of Extension. We stressed the NIFA and Smith-Lever handouts will be especially useful, and his staffer agreed, when Senator Casey meets with the House members in the future.

I also enjoyed meeting and discuss programming issues and network with our other NEAFCS leaders. The technology related presentations were another highlight for me as we work to improve our state program on-line presence.

Again, thanks for this scholarship, and the opportunity to learn so much more about Extension and NIFA nationally. It makes me proud work with such distinguished professionals and share our message to Congress.

*Molly Alexi (NC)*

This was one of the most beneficial conferences that I have attended. I learned how to better communicate with our stakeholders and policy makers and now have a clearer understanding of our Federal funding and how it has an effect on our local programs. The most useful tool was learning how to communicate how Extension programs are impacting the Economy, Education, and Nutrition concerns in our state.

On Monday, I attended the Networking Breakfast and spoke with Extension professionals across the county about the impacts they are having. I enjoyed greetings from Stan Moore, Michigan State University and Elizabeth Claypoole, Cornell University. Ralph Otto, Deputy Director, NIFA spoke about the Agency goals and their priorities. Douglas Steele, ECOP President spoke of how they are responding to pressing local and national issues.

Frankie Gould, Louisiana State University accepted the JCEP Excellence in Teamwork Award and spoke about the LSU AgCenter's AgMagic program.

I attended a presentation on how to tell the Cooperative Extension Story to Stakeholders; Making your Hill Visit Count; and then I attended the NEAFCS Association Session. Here we talked about the Impacts FCS agents are having across the county and the importance of reporting those impacts.

On Tuesday morning I attended the NIFA breakfast and round table discussion with the Program Leaders from 4-H Youth Development and then Family and Consumer Sciences and Child Development. It was very interesting to learn about the research going on at the Federal level and the committees they are involved with.

Later Tuesday morning I attended a session on Living Greener and using Technology to create learning environments to reach Millennials. This was an interesting topic even though they had some technical challenges. I also attended a session on cyber bullying and how an Agent in West Virginia took this all the way to the Legislator and helped to make cyber bullying a crime in their state.

After lunch I attended the Strengthening Local Leaders through KELD. Kentucky has done a great job developing leader lessons for Extension Homemakers and volunteers.

We then listen to and watched Steve Stark tell and draw and illustrative history story about Extension and the Morrill Act.

My Legislator visits went great. It was an awesome experience to be able to share the great work we are doing in Extension. My first visit was with Congressman Larry Kissell. I have met him a few times before; but never at his office in Washington, D.C.

He is very familiar with the great programs we are doing with youth, families, and farmers in Montgomery County and across the state. He is a former textile worker and school teacher. His wife currently works for Moore County Schools. We also talked with Chris Kelley his Legislative Director and he seemed to have an understanding of Extension and was supportive. Chris came to our County Commissioner meeting last month when our 4-Her's were being recognized for Youth Leadership in our county.

Our first appointment at the Senate was with Senator Kay Hagan's Legislative Correspondent; Curtis Davis. We learned that Hagan has a People's breakfast every Wednesday at 9am which is open for public comments and questions. Davis was very interested in listening to us and took notes. He did not have a good understanding of Cooperative Extension before the meeting; so I believe he learned a lot.

At Senator Richard Burr's office we met with a new Legislative Assistant from Vermont, Christopher Toppings. He was very nice but, he had no knowledge of Cooperative Extension. I gave him a little background of how we have 2 Land Grant Universities in NC and Extension Offices in each County. I explain all our programs and how these programs are addressing our Economy, Education, and Nutrition issues in our state. Dr. McKinney gave a great report on the History of Extension and tied in that is actually began in Vermont with Morrell. Sherrie Schwab explained how everything tied to our Federal dollars and the importance of passing the Farm Bill quickly.

Overall, this was an excellent conference and I am very grateful to have had this opportunity.

*Mary Campbell Wood (WI)*

I attended the 2012 PILD Conference on April 16-18<sup>th</sup> in Washington, DC and found that it exceeded whatever I had imagined it might be. The conference was excellent in every way. What a dynamite group of people to spend three days with!! It refreshed and inspired me, and I believe others in attendance, to listen and learn from top-notch presenters and to share conversation with colleagues around the country. I came away with a deepened sense of honor to be a part of the history and mission of Extension and the Land Grant dream.

The visits to Capitol Hill were a brand new experience for me. I'd never visited with representatives or legislators before and didn't realize the format for promoting our work directly and then directly asking for financial support. This isn't naturally easy for me because it's hard for me to ask for money or "toot my horn," so it was a very good Politics 101 exercise. Already, I have felt more assertive in this way.

I also appreciated finally being able to attend a NEAFCS meeting...for my first time. I learned that there is quite a variety in programming topics and structure of the "Family Living/Family Science/Consumer Science position throughout the states. I am interested in giving some input on the priorities chosen for the Impact Reports and know who to work with on this. I also liked the discussion and examples given on "Elevator speeches" after our Monday presenter spoke about the necessity of elevator and stump speech opportunities to promote ourselves and our work.

Thank you so much for awarding me a scholarship. It will help to defray the cost of attending the conference.

*Jill May (MN) Affiliate President*

I would like to thank JCEP for the opportunity to attend this year's PILD conference in Alexandria, VA. As President of NEAFCS-MN Affiliate, I represented our affiliate at this year's conference. Since this was the first time that I attended PILD, I really didn't know what to expect. Colleagues had said that it was a great conference to attend so I did look forward to this. It really was a great experience and I appreciate all the hard work that went into pulling this all together. The enthusiasm and professionalism that was present at the general sessions laid the foundation for our Capitol Hill visit. On a day to day basis, I think we oftentimes forget the funding that supports our work. This conference brings to the forefront the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships with our legislators that impact our funding. Although this isn't always the most comfortable position for me, I do understand the importance and need to build leaders within our organization that can effectively tell our story. Again, thank you for this wonderful experience.

*Linda K. Beech (KS) Affiliate President*

A celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morrill Act set the tone for the 2012 Public Issues Leadership Development conference in Washington DC. While looking back at the birth of the land-grant university system, speakers and break-out sessions showed that 150 years later, according to the conference theme, Cooperative Extension is "Relevant Now and Beyond." I appreciated this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to join outstanding Extension colleagues and volunteers from across the nation for two days of learning and preparation for advocacy. Special highlights for me were two break-out sessions presented by fellow Extension professionals. The transformational education model shared by the team from Montana gave a visual image of the unique characteristics of Extension education in the community. And, after experiencing several years of declining budgets in my county, I especially appreciated learning the effective strategies for advocacy used in Kansas City, Missouri to

turn their budget situation around. Thank you, NEAFCS, for the scholarship which helped to make this event possible for me. New knowledge, new friends and new experiences in our nation's capital combined for an outstanding PILD Conference.

*Julie Gardner, (TX) Affiliate President-Elect*

The 2012 Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) conference held the key to many new and insightful views related to Extension on the national level. Never before had I been able to view firsthand the budget cycle, the importance of interpretation, and the networking that occurs to insure the future of Extension throughout the United States.

The highlight of my trip was the following speakers and the newfound knowledge I gained from them:

**Dr. Ralph Otto** was able to share with us the vision and goals of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture in a way that was meaningful to all program areas. The continued emphasis on FCS related programs drove home the importance of quality programming and interpretation efforts that legislators understand and see the value of.

**Dr. Doug Steele** instilled in me through his presentation the fact that extension plays a vital role in addressing critical issues across our nation. He was also able to emphasize the importance of continued partnership efforts on the local, state and federal level so that Extension may not only retain current partnerships, but expand those as well.

**Dr. Marshall Stewart's** humor not only lightened the mood, but it also gave us a clearer picture of the importance of communication with stakeholders. The presentation helped to better define who stakeholders often are and how we, as extension agents, need to realize the variety of communication efforts needed to tell our stories.

Overall, PILD made a huge impact on my ability to better understand Extension funding as well as an impact on my ability to interpret my efforts to key leaders. I look forward to returning to PILD in the future and encouraging others as well.

*Susan Routh (OK) Affiliate President*

"Gratitude" was the word that Elizabeth Claypoole, 2012 PILD Conference Chairperson, used to begin PILD. That word describes my experience at PILD. I am grateful for the opportunity to attend PILD; it far surpassed my expectations. I am grateful to OEAFCS officers who have attended previous PILD Conferences and who shared their experiences to help prepare me for PILD and the Capitol Hill visits. PILD provided networking experiences with Extension professionals from across the United States and with National Institute of Food and Agriculture professionals such as Caroline Crocoll, Acting Assistant Director of Youth, Family and Community. The presentations during PILD were very relevant, informative, and helped to prepare us as advocates for Extension during our visits to Capitol Hill. Like those before me, I have begun to share my experiences with the next OEAFCS delegate to PILD 2013. My goal is to prepare her for a wonderful experience at PILD and to help her to prepare to advocate for Cooperative Extension at the Hill I am truly grateful to NEAFCS and OEAFCS for providing financial support for the PILD Conference.

Attending the PILD conference and the NEAFCS meeting that was held in conjunction with the conference was a very educational experience. It was my first in-person experience with NEAFCS at the national level and I enjoyed meeting and networking with other members.

"Impact Counts: Telling the Cooperative Extension Story to Stakeholders", which was presented by Marshall Stewart was very helpful in preparing for our visits to the Hill. He emphasized relationships and the importance of building them before you need them. Like our NDSU Extension administration, he emphasized the importance of having both an elevator and a stump speech that you can pull out at any time. We were also reminded of the importance of "thank you" and the fact that it takes seven times to of hearing something to make an impact.

The fact that we are celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Morrill Act made this visit to our representatives especially significant. ND native Steve Stark presented a wonderful illustrated history of the Morrill Act which I never tire of seeing. Thank you for accepting my application for the \$150 PILD Scholarship. I look forward to future associations with NEAFCS.

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*Melinda Hill (OH) Affiliate President-*

Traveling to our Nation's Capital to experience leadership lends a unique perspective to Extension's history. Hearing from representatives from NIFA and USDA about the future issues concerning the budget, mission and future roles that each of us will participate in during the upcoming years gave me a better understanding of the national budget process. When examples were given about telling our story to the stakeholders, here are the examples that I remember.

As we share what we are doing, base it around three easily remembered themes...he chose Economy, Education and Health. Know who you are and how you make a difference. Know the language with passion and connect your priorities with their priorities. Know who you are really talking to, politics are early about relationships, it really is about who you know. It begins at the local level, so make friends when you can and be thankful for their involvement. Know what is important to the person you are talking to, do your homework so that you can connect easily and then be flexible as you work through the negotiation, but make sure you ask for enough. One great caution, be honest, don't lie and don't promise more than you can deliver. Be authentic, know what you stand for and link with the stakeholder on a personal level.

This information will be beneficial on all levels of politics and as I learn more about the system, it will prove invaluable in establishing new relationships. I also appreciated learning more about the land grant system and how Extension was established. In learning about the national system, it was beneficial to link the local officials to the work that is going on around them. The point was made to talk with our stakeholders on a regular basis, make them aware of all the good things going on, on a regular basis. Recognize that the county and state timelines are and align local reporting with them. Seek local advocates and let them advocate on our behalf. Keep a notebook with all the details and programs in their districts, include dates and times of meetings and conversations so that you can easily retrieve the information. There was a special emphasis on getting to know the legislative assistants and I found our why during our visits on the hill. Each of them seemed to be very interested in what programs and contributions Extension was making in the communities and how they could link with other resources in the district.

I also gained insight from peers on methods and opportunities they used to tell their stories. They shared uses of social media, marketing, and ways to establish relationships with people to engage them with our mission and vision. One thing I've been able to apply already was the opportunity to share the trip in my weekly news article, and highlighted not only the how's and why's of a land grant, but several of the programs that are offered that many do not associate with Extension.

Again, thank you to the NEAFCS Board for the scholarship and the skills that will lay the foundation to better advocacy for Extension on the local, state and federal level as I become more involved.

*Cindy Schlenker Davies (NM) Affiliate President*

Both at PILD and JCEP there was a strong message of the importance of "brand value" for Extension in general as well as Family and Consumer Science specifically. You have heard NEAFCS is joining hands with our sister Family and Consumer Science organizations and adopting a logo for our very important profession.

The logo is on the NEAFCS web site (available for down loading) and we are all encouraged to make it our own. It is important that we be able to state clearly who we are and what we do. Between the roll out of the new logo and encouragement of developing a good elevator speech I am more confident than ever in spreading the message of the exceptional work we do in our homes, counties, states and country.

*Joy Dugan (IN) Affiliate President-Elect*

My attending Public Issues and Leadership Development allowed for me to gain insight into the national program partners that Extension can look to for initiatives and resources. Meeting those who represent the program partners is a large part of creating an understanding of the capacity of Extension. Hearing about those who we can connect to at the national programming level eases the ability to connect to resources and programming efforts. Meeting with state representatives, members of the Senate and the House, was tremendous. As we were making plans with each office, developing our messages, as well as arriving on site to experience the different congressional offices I felt a sense of connectedness in that we have linkages to create and maintain to keep an understanding of the vastness and effectiveness of Extension and its continuous abilities to keep pace with current trends and issues at both local and national levels of concern. My experience in having attended the PILD conference will be of significance and motivation to continuously be alert to how best to connect to resources and programming initiatives that create the greatest impact for the constituents in my scope of work.

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*Joanne Roueche (UT) Affiliate President*

Know who you are! (We have had Regional Directors talk about the importance of a well composed elevator speech - but this gave new meaning to having it prepared).

- Have clarity in your message - no code language
- Be concise
- Use common language
- Protect those above you. Make sure your plan is part of the University plan
- Connect your priorities with their priorities Know who you are talking to
- Politics is about relationships. It really is about who you know
- All politics is local
- Make friends when you don't need them
- Know what is important to them - do your homework
- Be flexible
- Politics is about compromise, negotiation Be honest
- Don't over promise
- Don't commit someone else
- Don't agree to something you are not comfortable with

I enjoyed the opportunity to have dinner and meet with the FCS Presidents. It has been invaluable to have the opportunity to take back messages on the FCS branding, updates from National Program Leaders and the cookbook grant. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to attend and all of the work that went into the conference.

*Susan Cosgrove (MS) Affiliate VP Public Affair*

The 2012 PILD Conference was filled with opportunities to broaden our understanding of the public policy issues that impact Extension and our clientele. Speakers gave us an update on the national outlook, from NIFA and ECOP. I really enjoyed Marshall Stewart from North Carolina talking on impact The NEAFCS meeting time was well spent. We were fortunate to have Caroline Crocoll, Division Director for Family and Consumer Sciences of NIFA address our group on understanding our federal partner. Debby Mathews provided copies of the National Impacts. This was a great learning time for all in attendance to see how all of us should be documenting our programming. I have attended over a dozen NEAFCS conferences, but had not met many of these members until PILD. The NEAFCS delegation enjoyed an evening of fellowship and dining at the historical Gadsby's Tavern.

Breakout sessions offered participants a wide range of topics, including living green, celebrating diversity, cyber bullying, program models and strategic planning. I participated in sessions on managing disasters, finding solutions to poverty and utilizing volunteer based organizations. In all of the sessions and meetings during the week, new friendships were made with colleagues from all professional associations. We had a special treat, getting to celebrate the Morrill Act's 150th Anniversary, with Steve Stark illustrating its story on a giant roll of paper on the wall right before us. It was amazing!!

Meeting with staff members of our Senators and Congressmen was a very busy day. We shared what we are doing in our respective program areas as well how Extension impacts Mississippi overall. The PILD Conference planning committee did an excellent job engaging participants to see "Cooperative Extension: Relevant Now and Beyond." I thank you for the financial support to participate in such an empowering experience.

*Ruth Vonderhoh, (NE) Affiliate President Elect*

Thank you so much for the opportunity to take part in the Public Issues and Leadership (PILD) conference. This educational experience provided me with the opportunity to understand the "bigger picture" of Extension and how our government works at the federal level! The visits to Capitol Hill with colleagues from ESP, NAE4-HA, and NACAA allowed me to share Extension's public values with Congressman Smith, Congressman Fortenberry, Senator Johanns, and Senator Nelson. I enjoyed the Nebraska Breakfast. This gave our group an opportunity to hear the Congressman and the Senators concerns about the budget, the post office closings, and other issues as well as meet other Nebraskan's visiting Capital Hill Thank you for the wonderful experience!

*Kisha Faulk (GA) Affiliate President-Elect*

Before going to PILD I thought I knew Extension. Of course I did, I'm the President-Elect of our affiliate and I've been a thoughtful participant of every conference, training and meeting I've attended. When I got to PILD, I realized that there was more for me to learn about our organization. Ultimately, I took away two very valuable lessons from the PILD conference.

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**Lesson One: How the USDA and Cooperative Extension truly fit together.** Now I understand who the "mysterious" Program Leaders are and what they do. I see the value of keeping the Program Leaders informed of what we do "on the ground." At the same time, I see how keeping ourselves informed afford us opportunities to tap into the resources of the UDSA Institutions. Participating in a round table with Program Leaders and having a presentation from Caroline Crocoll, USDA's Acting Assistant Director of the Institute of Youth, Family and Community, that outlined the direct connection of the USDA to NEAFCS brought everything together.

**Lesson Two: The other level of advocacy.**

For me, understanding the national Cooperative Extension issues, the issues of our association and learning - through training and action - how to connect our issues to those of elected officials was priceless. I left PILD feeling empowered to be an advocate locally, as well as feeling at ease with being an advocate nationally. I think the entire NEAFCS association membership could benefit from the topics shared at PILD. Our association needs to consider adding *being an advocate* training sessions to our national conference

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