Urban Program Director Comments

Interest in Urban programming is increasing around the country and Texas AgriLife Extension Service is seen as a model of interest because of your many successes. In an effort to share more of the research/studies that apply to Urban issues that have been done by many of our colleagues as part of graduate degree work, the Urban website will have abstracts from research with a contact for more information. We are fortunate in Texas to have so many Extension faculty working on issues that are important to all of Extension. So in the near future, look for the new link.

In the works for several years, we finally have an Urban Initiative Viewbook at the printers! Each of the 20 initiative counties have programs highlighted and I know that this will be an excellent interpretation tool for each of you as you work to help key decision-makers understand the breadth and depth of our Urban programs. It was well received at the annual Urban Legislative Interpretation event held at the Capitol in February. Over 24 offices were represented at the morning coffee and the staffers interest in AgriLife Extension and specific programs was very high. It is important that we look at many different opportunities to help interpret our programs. This was a successful and informative event that was followed up with local office contacts.

North Region Population Center Centras scheduled

The North Region has many population centers in the three districts and several years ago a conference brought agents together to talk about issues and gain insight into new approaches to programming. This year, their “conference” will be a series of three Centras that should be very informative. The first will be conducted this Thursday, April 3, 2008 from 10:00 – 12:00 Noon. The topic is “Power Brokers – Who are they and what can they do for you?”

The Guest URL for this conference is: 
http://webconference.tamus.edu/main/tce/User/GuestAttend.jhtml?S_guid=00000056182f00000117a71a5a27a3f6

Future dates/topics are:
May 1, 2008  9:00 – 12:00    Water Programming for Urban audiences
June 6, 2008  9:00 – 12:00    Reaching Audiences through Distance Education
Urban Professional Development Opportunity

The deadline for applications to be received for an Urban Professional Development Opportunity is April 21, 2008. Hopefully we will have agents who want to have the “urban initiative county” experience. Encourage those you know might be interested to apply. The two week experience will answer many questions about how programming takes place in a highly populated county. This will be the second year for the opportunity.

Value of Texas AgriLife Extension Service Urban Extension Programs

Earlier this year I was asked to work with the University of Tennessee Extension Service in developing a strategic plan for Urban Extension in their state. In preparation for the workshop, I asked colleagues in Texas to identify why they felt that Urban Extension was important to Texas AgriLife Extension Service. I’m sure you can add more, but following is what our colleagues said:

• Extension programs accessible to majority of state’s population.
• Access to concentrations of urban legislators and their constituents.
• Opportunities to diversify funding streams.
• Helps to ensure our programs are relevant.
• Helps broaden the way we define ourselves to be more inclusive.
• Urban youth can have 4-H program experience. (80% of state youth)
• Able to interpret urban program impacts to legislators.
• Enhances marketing and visibility to urban public.
• Collaborative efforts strengthen rural and urban programs.
• Formation with new partners (city and county departments – parks and rec; libraries; county initiatives).
• Large number of contacts through health fairs, clinics, and shows.
• Abundant availability of human/material resources results in strong programs.
• Urban counties coordinated efforts through Urban Program Director for greater impact.
• Leader of organization in trying new methods/models of reaching audiences; diversity; train the trainer and creative funding pools and partnerships.
• Urban programs are ideal for communicating clientele benefits and value to a growing proportion of elected officials.
• Many of our strong programming efforts start in urban counties and then are replicated in other counties. Urban agents serve as mentors and leaders within their districts and regions.
• Addresses issues unique to a specific urban environment or population where expertise and resources may not otherwise be available.
Spotlight

Building Young Families Conference
Because teenage parents need knowledge and skills to become more effective parents, Tarrant AgriLife Extension formed partnerships with other organizations in the community to sponsor a conference targeting teen parents and focusing on their needs. Over 300 teen parents attended the “Building Young Families” Conference from seven independent school districts. Workshops included parenting, maternal and child health, choosing childcare, cognitive development, healthy personal relationships and home safety.

Contact: Marian Ross, CEA-FCS, Tarrant

EarthKind Rose Brigade
Master Gardeners in Dallas, Collin, and Tarrant Counties are part of the EarthKind Rose Brigade, working with cities such as McKinney, Grapevine, and Addison to beautify public spaces with EarthKind roses and other insect-resistant and drought-tolerant landscape plants. These gardens use 75% less water than in a regular flower garden.

Contact: Dale Groom, CEA-Horticulture, Dallas County
Steve Chaney, CEA-Horticulture, Tarrant County