Items of Interest

NIFA Recognizes SRDC Team on Outstanding Contributions on Annual Day of Appreciation

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) announced NIFA Partnership Award recipients and Hall of Fame inductees, honoring those whose exemplary work has helped the agency fulfill its mission of investing in and advancing agricultural research, education, and extension.

NIFA’s Partnership Award for Multistate Efforts is granted to awardees whose projects are responding to critical needs important to each project leader’s state. This year’s award was presented to the Stronger Economies Together (SET) Initiative, a project run cooperatively between USDA Rural Development, the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) in partnership with Purdue University. SET aims to help rural counties overcome the economic challenges that they face. SET guides collaborations within multi-county regions, helping them to develop regional economic plans based on self-assessments of strengths and assets. Over 1,500 organizations across 54 regions in 38 states are currently engaged in plans to address needs and strengthen assets such as rural healthcare, agritourism, and entrepreneurship.

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CRD Webinar Series: Getting Community Stakeholders to Identify Water Quality Issues and Priorities Using Liberating Structures Webinar: November 10th, 2015 1pm CT/2pm ET

Cooperative Extension professionals have a long history of providing public issues education and encouraging civic engagement with the intention of inspiring local leadership to address challenging and often controversial issues. Public issues deliberation often creates strife among community residents with different groups struggling to come to consensus on how to tackle local problems. Cooperative Extension professionals pride themselves on their “toolbox” of methods for helping communities overcome such challenges. The method of Liberating Structures is one method for hosting inclusive meetings that generate ideas from everyone rather than the vocal minority. In Arkansas, Extension specialists led local residents of impaired
watersheds to set priorities for addressing nonpoint source pollution management. This is often a difficult task to achieve between a broad base of stakeholders that includes agricultural producers, land owners, conservationist and agency personnel. Arkansas Extension specialists used this method to get residents of local watersheds to see how they share common interests rather than opposing perspectives on local issues with water quality.

This webinar will provide attendees with an overview of the liberating structures methods used in the Arkansas Nonpoint Source Pollution Management water quality stakeholder forums, highlights from the water quality forums, recommendations for using liberating structures in other public issue engagement forums.

Evaluating for Public Value through Impact Narratives Webinar November 9th

How do we articulate our impact? Quantitative evaluation data informs, but does not necessarily inspire. A good story evokes strong feelings, and often endures in memory. This webinar highlights a qualitative evaluation method that combines a public value framework with storytelling.

At this session, you will hear about the process used to collect impact stories, see examples of stories, and learn about the "public value impact story rubric," a tool for writing and evaluating the public value components of an impact narrative.

New Director of the NCRCRD

On behalf of Dr. Ray Hammerschmidt, Director, Michigan State University Extension we are delighted to announce that Dr. Mark Skidmore has been named director of the North Central Region Center for Rural Development (NCRCRD). He will take over the duties from Dr. Scott Loveridge effective January 1, 2016. We look forward to him continuing the NCRCRD’s work with Extension professionals, researchers and their partners to enhance rural development outcomes in the 12-state north central region (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin).
Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America

The Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America assembles statistics on three broad categories of socioeconomic factors:

People: Demographic data from the latest American Community Survey, including age, race and ethnicity, migration and immigration, education, household size and family composition. Data have been added on veterans, including service period, education, unemployment, income, and demographic characteristics.

Jobs: Economic data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other sources, including information on employment trends, unemployment, industrial composition, and household income.

County classifications: The rural-urban continuum, economic dependence, persistent poverty, persistent child poverty, population loss, onshore oil/natural gas counties, and other ERS county typology codes.

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Grant Connections
Funding and Design Assistance Available for Rural Communities

The Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design™ 2016-2017 Request for Proposals is now open for rural communities facing design challenges, from main street revitalization to art-based community development. CIRD will select up to six communities, with populations 50,000 or less, to host a two-and-a-half-day workshop aimed at solving local design challenges and planning for the future. Selected communities receive a CIRD stipend of $10,000 dollars and in-kind professional assistance to organize the workshop and follow up activities. The workshops are interdisciplinary and feature a wide range of design, planning, and creative place making professionals, bringing together local leaders from non-profits, community organizations, and government agencies to develop actionable solutions to a community’s pressing design challenges. To apply and learn more, click HERE. The application deadline is January 12, 2016.

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USDA Accepts Applications to Fund Alternative Energy and Energy Efficiency Projects

Agriculture Under Secretary Lisa Mensah is encouraging rural small businesses to apply for loans and grants to support renewable energy and energy efficiency projects. USDA is accepting Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) applications for: 1) loans and grants for renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements, and 2) grants for energy audits and renewable energy development assistance.

Eligible agricultural producers and rural small businesses may use REAP funds to purchase and install renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements. Eligible renewable energy systems include energy from wind, solar, renewable biomass (including anaerobic digesters), small hydro-electric, geothermal, or hydrogen derived from these renewable resources. Energy audits and renewable energy development assistance grants are available to state, tribal, or local governments; institutions of higher education; rural electric cooperatives and public power entities. The REAP grants can pay up to 25% of the total project cost.
REAP applications are accepted continuously, and the next funding deadline for grants of $20,000 and less is Nov. 2, 2015. To learn more visit the USDA website at www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency or contact Mark Williams, Energy Coordinator for USDA Rural Development Nevada, at (775) 887-1222, Ext. 116.

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Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

Extension as Urban Policy Advisors Workshop: Sacramento, CA
December 1-2, 2015

This workshop is geared for Cooperative Extension professionals working in metropolitan communities to learn about why working at the policy level is important (relative to direct education programming); understanding how governmental systems are organized, what makes good policy, how to use science in policy development, local examples of policy development, and hands-on exercises. The Extension as Urban Policy Advisors workshop will precede the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL: HTTP://NUELACTION.ORG) network meeting, Dec 2-5, 2015 also in Sacramento, CA.

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Extension Climate Science Conference: Bozeman, Montana
December 8-10, 2015

The 2015 Extension Climate Science Conference will be December 8-10, 2015 in Bozeman, MT at the Montana State University Student Union Building (SUB). You’ll learn about: Climate Science Basics, Montana and Regional Climate Trends, Stakeholder Perspectives, Tools and Resources for Extension Programming, Effective Communication Techniques, and Program-focused Discussions and Opportunities to Collaborate. Please join our list for updates: EXTENSIONCLIMATESCIENCE@MONTANA.EDU

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New Partners for Smart Growth: Portland, Oregon
February 11-13, 2016

The New Partners Conference is heading back to the West Coast – Portland – after stops in America’s Heartland, the Rockies, and the Chesapeake Bay over the past three years. The nation’s largest smart growth and sustainability event, the theme for New Partners 2016 is “Practical Tools and Innovative Strategies for Creating Great Communities”, underscoring this year’s stronger emphasis on implementation. The program will feature tools, strategies, focused training, and new technologies that will help communities NOW.

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12th Annual Tri-State Diversity Conference
February 18-19, 2016

The Tri-State Diversity Conference is hosted by four land grant universities from Indiana, Kentucky, and Ohio. It is designed for administrators, faculty, and staff from Cooperative Extension, research, and academic programs; private and public university representatives; K-12 educators; community outreach leaders; health and social services professionals; employers and supervisors; human resource staff; elected and appointed officials; and all others wanting to expand diversity efforts and increase cultural understanding in their communities and workplaces.
Proposals for presentations are being invited for the 2016 conference on best practices, curriculum models, research, professional development training, and success stories for implementing diversity initiatives in a variety of settings as it relates to this year’s conference theme, “A Healthy Perspective on Diversity-Progress, Partnerships, and Possibilities.” The Planning Sub-Committee is seeking proposals for beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of diversity learning. These proposals are peer-reviewed and you will be notified by August 1, 2015 if your presentation has been selected for presentation at the 2016 conference. 

Extension Sustainability Summit 2016: Portland, OR
April 5–7, 2016

Held for the first time in 2013, this popular event promises an exciting two-day Summit addressing sustainability and Cooperative Extension’s outreach activities and opportunities. Plus field trips! And all the local foods and sustainably-created fun the Rose City has to offer! Call for proposals due October 12th.

2016 National Health Outreach Conference: Roanoke, VA
April 5–7, 2016

Health literacy is emerging as a leading issue affecting U.S. consumers’ health. It has been shown to be a stronger predictor of a person’s health than age, income, employment status, education level, or race. To best meet the health literacy needs of consumers, Extension educators can use best practice guidelines for improved health communications to develop effective educational materials, which include getting to know the target audience; sending clear, actionable message(s); and using appropriate formatting with meaningful visuals. Extension educators can apply these best practice guidelines to better promote health-related behaviors and communicate science more effectively to consumers. Proposal deadline October 16, 2015.

15th Annual Cambio de Colores (Change of Colors) Conference: Columbia, MO
June 8-10, 2016

You should check out this conference focused on immigrant integration in new destination areas. It brings together folks from NGOs, service providers, educators, researchers, policymakers, students and others to discuss the research and best practices that are working to help strengthen our communities and empower our community members. I’ve had positive experiences there – you should give it a try.

Webinars
CRD Webinar Series: Getting Community Stakeholders to Identify Water Quality Issues and Priorities Using Liberating Structures Webinar:
November 10th, 2015 1:00 pm Central/ 2:00 pm Eastern

More on Cyber Security
November 6th, 2015 11:15am Central/ 12:15pm Eastern

HERE’S THE LINK TO THE GOOGLE+ EVENT
HERE’S THE LINK TO THE YOUTUBE PAGE
Archived Webinars

South Region CRD Webinar Series – Youth Engagement Leadership Program
October 16th, 2015 10am Central/ 11am Eastern

Why Local Food Matters
September 10th, 2015, 10 a.m.

Unequal Treatment: Disparities in Access, Quality, and Care
August 18, 2015, 1 p.m.

Naming and Addressing Racism: A Primer

Community Health Needs Assessments in Rural Communities using Principles of Community Based Participatory Research
June 9, 2015

Strategies for Developing Successful CRED Extension Programs: Perspectives of a Program Leader
June 15, 2015

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