

idea corner

An Accountability Plan

Many of us involved in Extension work presume that clientele understand what we do in our individual assignments. But can we—should we—assume that everyone else understands and appreciates what the state's land-grant institution provides to people locally through its total educational delivery system? Do we, as individual change agents, talk and write too much in terms of individual

programs? Do we present bits and pieces of a puzzle; not the total picture?

LaVern Freeh of the University of Minnesota, in a speech to the National Association of County Agricultural Agents, said:

. . . we continually need to strive for good performance publicly appreciated. . . . The only [pathway] worth pursuing involves good programs and good performance coupled with continuous well-planned efforts to keep the public informed about them.

And he's right!

Several geographic units of the University of Missouri Extension field staff are now publicly expressing what they do as a unit by:

1. Preparing and maintaining an overall public relations plan.
2. Preparing an annual report on overall staff activities and accomplishments for distribution to Extension councils and local government representatives.
3. Identifying and crediting local Extension council leadership.
4. Condensing the report into a summary and disseminating it as a news release.
5. Establishing a news media relations committee that holds periodic meetings with editors and reviews the Extension news effort.

Extension staff—county or area—can gain visibility and accountability as a unified outreach of the land-grant university that's working in partnership with local people by preparing interesting stories for the local news media.

The effort helps fit the Extension puzzle together so people can see the total picture.

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