

Unprecedented Times and April *JOE* Highlights

Abstract

As we deal with multiple impacts of a historic pandemic, Extension professionals must refocus some of their efforts and find ways to carry on with others. I address this circumstance in both sections of this Editor's Page: "Unprecedented Times" and "April *JOE* Highlights."

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Unprecedented Times

As is uttered daily now, these are unprecedented times. We exist in the midst of a pandemic, and Extension professionals across the country have refocused priorities to provide relevant information, answer questions, address needs, and soothe concerned minds. As suggested by the authors of this issue's lead Tools of the Trade article, "during these unprecedented times, Cooperative Extension has a unique responsibility to push forward and continue to serve the people." Additionally, roles played by Extension professionals in normal times—forging pathways toward improved public health, enabling the effectiveness of food systems, building economic strength and community resilience, fostering sustainable use of natural resources, and instilling in young people confidence, compassion, and the desire to contribute to one's world—are no less important during a crisis. In fact, they lay a foundation for being better able to handle one. Speaking as the editor of *JOE*, I am more pleased than ever to be part of a forum that allows you to share information with one another for the purpose of better serving millions of U.S. residents. Speaking as one of those residents, I thank you all.

April *JOE* Highlights

Much of the content in this issue of *JOE* can be viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tools of the Trade article "[Tools for Quickly Adapting During Pandemics, Disasters, and Other Unique Events](#)" describes Extension responses to effects of COVID-19 and explores how those responses may be employed in the future. However, connections also exist between the multifaceted and nuanced consequences of the pandemic and the many everyday impacts Extension has on people's lives. Articles throughout the issue reflect this concept.

People are resourceful. And so right now we have parties in chat rooms, Zoom with grandparents, and take webinars to fill time previously consumed by long commutes. But none of these actions is a replacement for social proximity, face-to-face interaction, and hands-on experiences. Today's circumstances underscore

through omission the good that comes from physical connectedness. In contrast is the bad that can stem from disconnectedness. The author of this issue's Commentary, "[Extension Needs Outreach Innovation Free from the Harms of Social Media](#)," challenges JOE readers to acknowledge the research base identifying detrimental effects of social media and think outside the screen in devising outreach methods that support Extension's mission of fostering well-being.

In other articles, the relationship between nuanced effects of the pandemic and everyday impacts of Extension is borne out in descriptions of methods for designing programming that accounts for the contexts in which audiences live, participating in or facilitating coalitions meant to solve critical societal quandaries, increasing empathy for others, and helping parents be their children's first teachers. Such articles include the Features "[Introducing the Human Development-EcoLogic Model: A Practical Approach for Outreach and Extension Education Programs](#)," "[The Art and Science of Networking Extension](#)," and "[Gray for a Day: Exploring the Impact of a Sensory Aging Experience](#)"; the Research in Brief "[Partnering with Faith-Based Organizations to Promote Positive Parenting: Example and Lessons Learned](#)"; and the Ideas at Work entry "[Scaling Community Health Coalitions: The Well Connected Communities Pilot Initiative](#)."

Times of crisis also have a tendency to spotlight existing inequities. In their Feature "[Increasing Participation of Women in Agriculture Through Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Outreach Methods](#)," the authors reflect on research regarding the importance of recruiting women into medical schools to address an ongoing shortage of doctors in the United States, a deficiency that has been crystallized as the pandemic sweeps the nation. They mention this fact to emphasize the value of ensuring that girls and young women are exposed early and often to occupational options they may feel excluded from, such as careers in agriculture. A similar theme runs through the Ideas at Work offering "[Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math: From Camps to Careers](#)."

Elsewhere in the issue, authors focus on services people have long relied on Extension to provide, as evidenced by a handful of Research in Briefs. For example, the authors of "[Implementation of Drone System in Survey for Tomato Chlorotic Spot Virus](#)" describe a study exploring the efficacy of an innovative agricultural technology. The author of "[Tipping the Balance on Winter Deicing Impacts: Education Is the Key](#)" urges Extension professionals to enact a program that contributes in a unique way to protection of the planet. And the authors of "[Parent-Focused Childhood Obesity Intervention Improves Family Functioning and Children's Well-Being](#)," "[Extension Military Parent-Teen Camp Experiences: Family Resilience Building in Action](#)," and "[Evaluation of Juntos 4-H: A Wraparound Program Helping Latinx High Schoolers Succeed](#)" present wide-ranging ways to support families and youths.

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