

Episode 0: So...what is Extension, anyway?

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Blake Moore:

My name is Blake Moore, Natural Resources and Horticulture agent.

Dan Severson:

Hey, I'm Dan Severson, ag agent.

Jake Jones:

Jake Jones, Kent County ag agent.

Katie Young:

And I'm Katie Young, Digital Content Specialist.

Blake Moore:

Welcome to Extension 302.

Blake Moore:

We have Dr. Michelle Rogers with us. She brought her visionary leadership to the University of Delaware in April of 2012. As Associate Dean and Director of Cooperative Extension and Outreach, she provides overall leadership for programs, personnel, and the organizational development of UD Cooperative Extension. She holds a BS degree in Home Economics Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and a Master's degree in Rural Sociology, and PhD in Agricultural Education, both from Penn State University.

Blake Moore:

Thank you, Michelle, for joining us.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Thanks for the opportunity.

Blake Moore:

So, what is the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension?

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Well, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension's been around for a hundred years, but we've been a changing organization. We were first established to bring the research of the University to the people in the communities, to translate that research into meaningful application. And so we do that in a lot of different areas. We do that in agriculture, which is very much at our roots. But always, since the beginning of time, has been in the area of family and family needs, youth and the

4H program is part of our history, and community development type of work. Extension really touches almost everybody's life in some way with opportunities and information.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

The other great thing about Cooperative Extension is the work that we're doing isn't just from Delaware. There's cooperative extension in every state across the country and if it's something that we don't have expertise in, we can connect to other universities across the country and get that information. That's what cooperative extension is, extending the University into the community.

Dan Severson:

I totally agree. When I work with my producers, I tell them, "I don't have all the answers, but I can find a person that can answer them for you."

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

That's a great extension answer. We're not out to sell anything and that's what makes us unique. We're really just here with unbiased information that's focused on research and facts, to help people and citizenry make informed decisions.

Dan Severson:

Can you give us a little bit of the history of how it developed at the land grant university?

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Extension, as I mentioned before, is over a hundred years old. We celebrated that hundredth anniversary in 2014. It started with the land grant mission with universities being designated as land grant, which meant that they were to take care of the common person, making education available to all of the citizens in the country. And at that time it was during the Civil War. And it's really interesting that our history for the land grants came at a time that our country was so divided on many things. But the one thing that they had in common, and the law that passed was about land grant universities. So people really believed, over 150 years ago in the importance of education. And so a lot of research was being done at the University, and it was to be made available to all, and not just those who could afford it.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

We started with demonstration trials and started with actually with cotton and the boll weevil, and the problems with that. We knew we had the research to solve the problem, but people weren't applying it. So Extension helped to resolve that issue. We had new corn hybrids that we knew would create greater productivity, and this is a time in our country when growing agriculture and production was really critical. So that started with corn clubs where youth were brought in, and asked to grow different varieties of corn on their farm and see and kind of compete with each other and see who could have the greatest production. And as a result, their parents caught on to the different hybrids, and the different ideas and really disseminated that information.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

So that's really our history. We're out in offices in the counties, in the communities, one of the few systems across the country that exists in every county. There's over 3000 Extension offices. And

that's what we are today. That's one thing that's maintained is that hands on, show me, help me, walk beside me kind of learning.

Blake Moore:

So Dr. Rogers, I'm relatively new to the Extension team, but I've been working in the public sector and the private sector for years before this. And Cooperative Extension has just been a huge asset. So what are some of the most rewarding experiences that you have had?

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Well, I have had a long career in Extension at this point. I've worked at three different land grant institutions and all with Cooperative Extension. And the most rewarding thing is seeing that people's lives are changed through knowledge. It saves businesses. It's helped people be more knowledgeable about how to take care of themselves, and their family, and how to increase the production of agriculture in this country. Probably some of the most exciting for me has particularly been working with youth, and seeing them become the next leaders in the community as a result of being involved in the program. That's what's the rewarding part of it.

Jake Jones:

So yeah, our last question would be where would you like to see Extension in the future?

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Just continuing to respond to the needs that arise and doing this in ways that reach more and more people. I'd like our perception of Extension to be understood by communities. We do agriculture certainly, and want that to remain, but also that we do so many other things that can be helpful to the communities and are a vital resource. So as we go forward, I hope that we've talked about the area of health, and the importance of health in our country, and in the next 100 years could we also be seen as a resource for health and wellbeing of our communities? And I hope that we're reaching more and more people on being responsive to the needs across the state, and across the country as a system wide organization.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

So I have a question for you all. Am I allowed to ask a question back the other way? So help me. Why Extension 302.

Blake Moore:

That's a great question. Extension 302 is just another way to reach clientele, to reach the folks that we serve, and also give that information that we work so hard to provide to the folks that might not normally reach out to us.

Dr. Michelle Rogers:

Great,

Dan Severson:

So Extension means Cooperative Extension, 302 is Delaware's area code.

Blake Moore:

Yeah. Great. Good job, Dan. Way to pick that up. I missed that one.

Dan Severson:

I'm slow but you know the sun shines on the dog every once in a while.

Blake Moore:

That's for sure. As you've heard in this episode already from Dr. Rogers, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension has a wide reach for all citizens in Delaware. We cover a wide variety of topics and today we're going to start talking with some of our team leaders to give us an overview of more specific topics that you can contact us and get help on.

Dan Severson:

It is our pleasure to welcome Dr. Emily Ernst to the Extension 302 podcast. Emily is one of our ag team leader for University of Delaware Extension.

Dr. Emmalea Ernst:

Thanks, Dan. So our team includes extension agents, specialists, faculty, and also smattering of research associates, and associate scientists. That's what I am. We cover topics that are related to agronomic and vegetable crop production and then also animal production for poultry, small ruminants, beef and dairy. We have a lot of collaboration and overlap with the Horticulture team. And some people work extensively in both areas. The ag team folks are in contact with growers to provide recommendations on best management practices and also to help troubleshoot and identify the root cause of problems that inevitably arise in ag production.

Dr. Emmalea Ernst:

Many of us are also involved in applied research about best management practices or how to apply emerging technology. The weekly crop up date is located on the web. We have announcements about animal related programs as well as crop related, and then often announcements about things relating to the Hort team, and the way to subscribe to get the email every week, is to enter your email address in the little box that's in the sidebar on the website.

Dr. Emmalea Ernst:

I just want to say that we are really committed to continuing to serve you-

Dan Severson:

Because farming doesn't stop.

Dr. Emmalea Ernst:

No. Neither does the weather or the diseases.

Dan Severson:

Yes. Thank you, Miss Emily.

Katie Young:

We are here with Kathleen Spillane of the Family and Consumer Sciences Program. Kathleen, tell us a little bit about your program.

Kathleen Splane:

Okay. So I'm Kathleen Spillane and I'm the co-program leader for the Family and Consumer Science Group with the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension and we work by conducting direct education programming, and we also work through helping communities be healthier by working with coalitions to create better environments for people to be more healthy. And what's a little bit unique about our programming and our work is that we feel like every single person in Delaware could benefit from the types of programming that we provide.

Kathleen Splane:

So some of the programming, the direct education programming, that we offer throughout the state of Delaware to all different audiences, are things like our diabetes program. It's a great program that offers education plus cooking skills for people with diabetes. One of our major initiatives is our programming and food safety. We have a program called Would Your Kitchen Pass a Food Safety Inspection, for consumers, all the way through our serve safe classes for individuals in the restaurant industry. We also have programs in mindfulness, helping people relieve stress and understand how they can control their mental wellbeing. And as far as financial programming, we have programs like planning for your retirement, creating a spending plan. We have programs on tricky terminology that helps people when they go in the grocery store to understand all those terms that are on those labels.

Kathleen Splane:

So we really encourage you to check out our programs. We have something for everybody, of all different age ranges, all different demographics, wherever you live. We're there to offer help in creating healthier families and communities in Delaware.

Jake Jones:

So Hey everybody. We're here with Doug Krause who is a state program leader for 4-H youth development at the University of Delaware.

Doug Crouse:

4-H is the largest youth development organization. It actually reaches over six million youth worldwide and it's a program that's been going strong for over a 118 years, starting back in 1902. We follow that mission of empowering youth to reach their full potential, working in partnership with caring adults, trying and experiencing new hands on activities. You know there's that stereotype out there that to be in 4-H you have to live on a farm, raise an animal, cooking and can, and the current program is so far from that. It's certainly developed over the years. The course it's available to everybody. There's over a hundred project areas that youth can explore and learn about. Last year alone Delaware 4-H reached over 27000 youth, just here in the state of Delaware.

Doug Crouse:

We work in three primary national mandate areas, science and technologies, one, healthy livings another, and our third one is civic engagement. We do this through a variety of ways. It could be those community clubs where we have those adults out in the community that have started, organized a club, to work with the kids. We have military programs, we have an afterschool programs. We have animal science programs. That's a huge one. Many camps. We do things in schools, there's school enrichment programs. Have a lot of grant projects. We feel that we give kids an opportunity to build strong leadership skills. We also are able to share a lot of public presentation skills for our youth, so they can go out and present themselves well and be strong leaders, and leading others and just take all the life skills that they learned through 4-H that helps them in their daily lives.

Blake Moore:

Joining me is Carrie Murphy. She's a Horticulture agent and master gardener coordinator for Newcastle County. She's also the program leader for the Lawn and Garden team.

Carrie Murphy:

Thanks Blake. Our statewide Lawn and Garden team is a subset of our larger agriculture team. It consists of Extension specialists, some of whom are also faculty in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, educators like yourself, and master volunteers including our master gardeners, composters and naturalists. These master volunteers have been trained to provide outreach and education alongside our extension professionals to further expand our reach in our communities, and provide support to the gardening public, as well as our important green industry here in Delaware. In each of our counties folks have access to our lawn and garden experts through a variety of services, which includes our garden telephone line, ask an expert, which is an online vehicle for asking lawn and garden related questions from our website, soil testing, plant diagnostic services, demo gardens in each of our county offices, workshops and training, technical assistance, and also site visits for the industry.

Carrie Murphy:

More importantly, our professionals and volunteers are in the communities educating folks in sustainable landscapes, integrated pest management, soil health, food gardening, lawns, plant selection, and much, much more. We have an awesome team who works incredibly hard to provide current research and information to support and further enhance our Delaware's livable landscapes.

Katie Young:

This podcast is for educational purposes only. The views expressed by both guests and hosts are their own and their appearance on this program does not imply endorsement by the University of Delaware or UD Cooperative Extension. We hope you've enjoyed today's episode and will come back for more. In the meantime, please subscribe. Visit us online at UDEL.edu/extension, and join us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram at UD Extension.

Katie Young:

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