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FINDING MR/MS RIGHT: EXTENSION'S ROLE IN ASSISTING THE HIRING PROCESS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND NON-PROFITS

John Amrhein* and Hal Hudson

ABSTRACT:
We've all seen government boards, commissions and non-profit organizations struggle with the issues related to recruiting and hiring a top level manager: What technical skills do we want? What leadership style is appropriate for us? What are we willing to pay, and what will we get for that? Extension can play a valuable role assisting these entities with the recruiting and hiring process. MSUE Local Government Agent and County Extension Directors have worked together to assist county boards with the process of hiring new county administrators. Using these experiences as a backdrop, seminar presenters will take participants through the entire hiring process, including identifying desirable skills, crafting the job description, developing the interview format and final candidate selection. Presenters will discuss how the traditional roles of Extension--education, facilitation, dispute resolution--were applied throughout the entire process. Participants will receive copies of materials developed to assist board members, and reflect on some of the unique situations that have arisen while providing assistance to communities on this critical decision.

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NAVIGATING THE CONTENTIOUS TIDES OF PUBLIC POLICY DEBATE

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ABSTRACT:
One of the reasons emotions get heated in public policy discussions is that public policy touches on core values such as liberty, equity, justice, and community. Yet, other human factors contribute as well. Relationship systems can function to reduce stress and help all members succeed, or they can function to recycle stress, and keep members in polarized positions. Responses can lead to positive action, or to confusion and poor decisions. This workshop introduces Bowen Natural Systems Theory, which explores the predictable ways people interact and offers a unique perspective for understanding the emotional fallout of policy initiatives. Systems thinking raise interesting questions about what fuels polarization between people when what they care about is at stake. It also generates new ideas for how Extension workers might navigate the tides of intensity that arise in public policy work.

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TERRORISM: WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

Barbara A. Brown*

ABSTRACT:
Participate in a real National Issues Forum (NIF) on terrorism, like the ones held in a middle school in Sumter, SC. (Three hundred (300) youths and teachers participated in seven deliberative forums to discuss three directions of public action in regard to terrorism; What should we do now? Have an all out war to defeat the global terror network. Take decisive measures to bolster homeland security. Or, address grievances and expand efforts to reduce hatred in a battle for the hearts and minds of the Muslim nations.) These youths could not understand why other nations hate America and demonstrated a major need for global education among our youth. NIF, as a community building tool, gives citizens practice at deliberative democracy. People need to come together to reason and talk--to deliberate about common problems. The forum on terrorism will give seminar participants the opportunity to participate in a real forum, learn and practice deliberative democracy skills, and understand how NIF can be used as a community building tool to build social capital. Additionally, the terrorism forum can be used as a means to initiate global education at the local level. Developed by Kettering Foundation and the National Issues Forum Network, NIF is a nonpartisan, nationwide network of locally sponsored forums for the consideration of public policy issues. They are rooted in the idea that democracy requires an ongoing deliberative dialogue. (Youths and adults, deliberating together on issues of public concern, can be an ideal community youth development tool.)

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DEMOCRACY IN ACTION: THE IMPACT ON A PUBLIC POLICY SIMULATION ON THE ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Janet Fox*

ABSTRACT:
In a democracy, the need for a body of informed, responsible citizens capable of confronting, debating and ultimately, deciding issues of public policy cannot be overstated. Given the importance of civic engagement in supporting a democratic government, the decline of civic engagement among today's young people reported in countless research studies is cause for concern. Lack of political participation can result in greater societal inequalities, eventually weakening and undermining democracy. Unicameral Youth Conference, a four-day 24-hour simulation, explored the legislative process from bill introduction in a committee hearing all the way through final reading and voting. Following the conference, the youth completed a retrospective mixed model survey. Participants rated their understanding or involvement on a number of items related to civic and political engagement on a five-point scale. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and one sample t-test. On a five-point scale from no understanding or involvement to complete understanding or involvement, participants indicated gains in the role citizens play in public policy; understanding the legislative process; who is affected by an issue; that conflict and controversy are a normal part of public policy; the influence citizens have on the law; awareness of the citizen's role in politics; and desire to become more active. Public policy experiences not only break down fears of getting involved in public policy but spurs enthusiasm and interest to stay involved. In helping to shape public policy, youth and their community are the beneficiaries of long-lasting civic engagement.

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SOLUTION FOCUSED AGING IN PLACE

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ABSTRACT:
Successful long term living requires considerable advance planning. Aging in place is a phenomenon that is a preferred option but often very difficult because of community design, family structure, unavailable resources, or appropriate planning left too late in life. This workshop will look at the issues, opportunities, and actions taken in Howard County, Maryland to create a successful community in which to Age in Place successfully. Cooperative Extension has formed a working partnership with other agencies, providers, and for profit groups to present a "CAregivers Conference", create a "Caregivers Resource Center", support the Senior Health Insurance Advocacy Program and create a speakers bureau for issues relevant to caregivers and caregiving. Through a working partnership financial resources have been pooled, staff have been shared, and consumers served. A continuing effort of the partnership are monthly workshops titles "Understanding Long Term Living-the financial and social implications." Howard County has the fastest growing senior population in Maryland. The services available are many and varied and have created issues because of their availability and the financial status of the residents. Regardless of community size the issues and approaches we have faced and resolved are issues faced by every community in the U.S. The challenge is will cooperative extension step up and help solve the challenges of our aging communities and citizens.

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MEDS GONE MAD? RELIEF FOR SENIOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

Margie Hudson*

ABSTRACT:
Rising prescription drug costs is a increasing concern for our elderly population. Prescription drug costs doubled during the years between 1992 and 2000 and prices are expected to more than double again in the next 10 years. Since most elderly Americans are living on a fixed income, it is becoming harder for the elderly to afford needed drug therapy. A study by the US Department of Health and Human Services released in 2000 showed that prescription drugs not covered by Medicare account for one sixth of all personal health spending by elderly people. Congress recognizes this as a major concern of the elderly and those who care for them but so far nothing has been done to expand Medicare's coverage to include most prescription drugs. Responding to these needs, many major pharmaceutical companies now offer drug discounts for certain senior citizens with no drug coverage. This poster display will cover the current status of this issue and will include a list of companies and organizations who offer assistance for prescription medical therapies in handout form.

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THE NEW SCIENCE OF FOOD: FACING UP TO OUR BIOTECHNOLOGY CHOICES

David B. Patton* and Mark Edelman

ABSTRACT:
The poster will feature an overview of a new publication "The New Science of Food: Facing Up to Our Biotechnology Choices" authored by Extension Specialists Mark Edelman and David Patton. The publication is one of the 2003 National Issues Forums booklets written under a contract to Farm Foundation. The booklet explores the conflicting public positions that have emerged about the application of biotechnology to food. It sets out three broad approaches to public policy: (a) Let Science and Enterprise Guide Our Food System; (b) Safety First: Protect Our Health and Environment; (c) Encourage Multiple Food Sources and Full Disclosure. This issue book can be used in a wide range of Extension programs in food science, agriculture, consumer science, environment, and international trade. A summary of the book will be available as a handout, along with handouts explaining the NIF deliberative public forum. Order forms for the booklet and the accompanying video will also be available.

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