A Day in the Life of an Extension Agent: Revealing the “Best Kept Secret”

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Abstract  
Given the diverse needs to which the Cooperative Extension Service responds, fully grasping an Extension agent’s daily roles and responsibilities may be difficult without experiencing them firsthand. Extension courses at the graduate level can provide excellent insight regarding the history of Extension, its global nature, the theory behind adult and nonformal education, and how to develop and evaluate Extension programs. However, the gap between the classroom and the field can be difficult to bridge. This can be especially true for international students who do not have prior experience in the United States’ Cooperative Extension Service. Communicating “a day in the life” of an Extension agent from an “outsider’s” perspective may be the key to sparking wider knowledge, awareness, and interest concerning what “Extension” actually is.

Thus, the purpose of the poster will be to reveal “the best kept secret” known as the Cooperative Extension Service via a clear depiction of an agent’s daily roles and responsibilities. The specific information to be portrayed stems from a summer-long case study between a Florida livestock Extension agent and an international graduate student. The poster will describe an agent’s (a) typical work week, (b) county responsibilities, (c) major projects, (d) clientele served, (e) impacts among county clientele, and (f) work-related challenges.

Although international agricultural Extension students may have Extension background experience in their home countries, they may know little to nothing about an Extension agent’s roles and responsibilities in the United States. Communicating about Extension is continuously advocated in the Extension literature (Hogan, 1994; McDowell, 2004), but for international students along with others less familiar with the United States’ Extension system, the key may lie more specifically in communication from an outsider’s perspective.

Keywords: Communicating Extension, international perspective