University of Missouri Extension Offers 10 Services For Counties

By Tony DeLong, County Council Coordinator

What do counties want from University of Missouri Extension and what can Extension offer commissioners in their decision-making roles?

These were among the questions asked a group of commissioners during a focus group session at the Missouri Association of Counties' annual meeting at Tan-Tar-A last November. The session was sponsored by Extension to gain feedback from county commissioners to improve communication and local Extension programming.

In a nutshell, your colleagues said they want ongoing communication with Extension faculty, staff and councils – instigated as frequently by Extension as by them. They also said that written communication should tell in brief form what Extension can do. Most importantly, they said counties would like to be Extension clients, recipients of assistance with such needs as demographic analysis and best ways to control noxious weeds in public right-of-ways. Research-based information dealing with economic development questions was also a priority need.

These requests are appropriate, since it is Extension's mission to help people understand change, solve problems, and make informed decisions.

While some Extension programs may vary by county, the following is a list of 10 services University of Missouri Extension can offer to county officials:

Private pesticide applicator training. Public concerns over potential effects of pesticides on human health and the environment continue to increase. Additionally, new laws and regulations governing pesticides and their use make an intensive training program essential. Regional and state Extension specialists can assist county citizens in this arena. Training for government employees is provided by the Missouri Department of Agriculture. Information about how to control noxious weeds and seed roadways with native plants that need little maintenance also is available. See: http://ipm.missouri.edu/pat/index.asp.

Fire, rescue and law enforcement training. The MU Fire and Rescue Training Institute provides education for 915 fire departments across the state. The institute's 709 courses with 16,000 enrollments prepare firefighters to deal with medical emergencies, hazardous materials, and acts of terrorism, as well as fire. See: http://mufrti.org/. The MU Law Enforcement Training Institute helps police and other public safety

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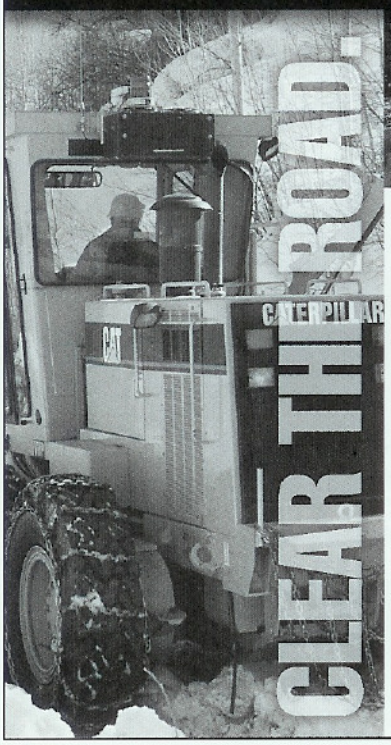

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officials, such as animal cruelty investigators, stay on the cutting edge. More than 1,200 Missouri officials participate in law enforcement classes. See: http://missouri.edu/~letiwww/.

Community economic impact analysis to make informed decisions. The Community Policy Analysis Center can help communities work through "what-if" questions about plant closure or location, healthcare facilities, highway and river port improvement, environmental planning, welfare-to-work and other topics. Extension faculty also can involve your community's residents in seeing options for dealing with knotty problems. See: http://cpac.missouri.edu/.

Local statistical profiles, based on Census data, to assist with comprehensive planning. The Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSEDA) has a wealth of information online and in print about your county's population, employment, transportation, household composition, housing and education. OSEDA personnel also are available to make community presentations. See: http://oseda.missouri.edu/.

Leadership RAP (Ready and Proud) education for juveniles in detention centers. Four times per year, Extension conducts a weeklong program called Leadership RAP at the Robert L. Perry (Boone County) Juvenile Justice Center. Studies of program participants from 1996-1999 and from 2000-2003 have shown that juveniles participating in this program are at least 28 percent less likely to be referred to juvenile authorities later for criminal violation. All of this results in lower law enforcement and incarceration costs. See: http://extension.missouri.edu/boone/CommDev/lrap.htm. To learn how you might implement a program in your county, contact Ron Higginbotham at HigginbothamR@missouri.edu or 573-445-9792.

The Missouri Small Business Development Centers and related programs provide education and individualized assistance to more than 3,000 start-up and existing entrepreneurs each year, helping them create jobs, sales, profits and investments. Extension's business development specialists take referrals and assist with county, community and economic development planning efforts. Assistance to business owners and managers is based on the client's specific needs. Areas of help include management, planning, capitalization, marketing and human resources. Business development specialists can assist with personnel, management and financing issues for both non-profit and for-profit organizations. See: http://missouribusiness.net.

Addressing complex public issues. Extension can provide a neutral venue for airing complex, contentious issues, such as land use, health care, immigration and biotechnology. Conflict resolution training, group facilitation and deliberative dialogue can promote better understanding and communication between you and the public. See: http://ssu.missouri.edu/commdev/pubdelib/index.htm or contact Sandy Hodge at 573-882-4435.

Safe, supervised, educational opportunities for young people during out-of-school time. More than 29 percent of K-12 youth in self care would be likely to participate in an after-school program if one were available in the community. Thirty-two percent of K-12 youth spend an average of seven hours per week unsupervised after school. High-quality 4-H programs from 3 to 6 p.m., summers, evenings and weekends transform these prime times for juvenile crime into golden hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun, and meaningful contributions to the community. See: http://4h.missouri.edu/go/projects/computer/labs/, or for more ideas about how you can create a program in your area, contact your local Extension office.

Local Government Partnership. A collaborative effort of University of Missouri Extension, University of Missouri-St. Louis and the East-West Gateway Council of Governments, the Local Government Partnership is a resource in the St. Louis region and statewide. Elected and non-elected local government officials can access quality information, technical assistance and training that will enhance the capacity of municipalities and counties to address existing and emerging constituent and government needs. For more information, contact Julianne Stone, director, at 314-421-4220, X280.

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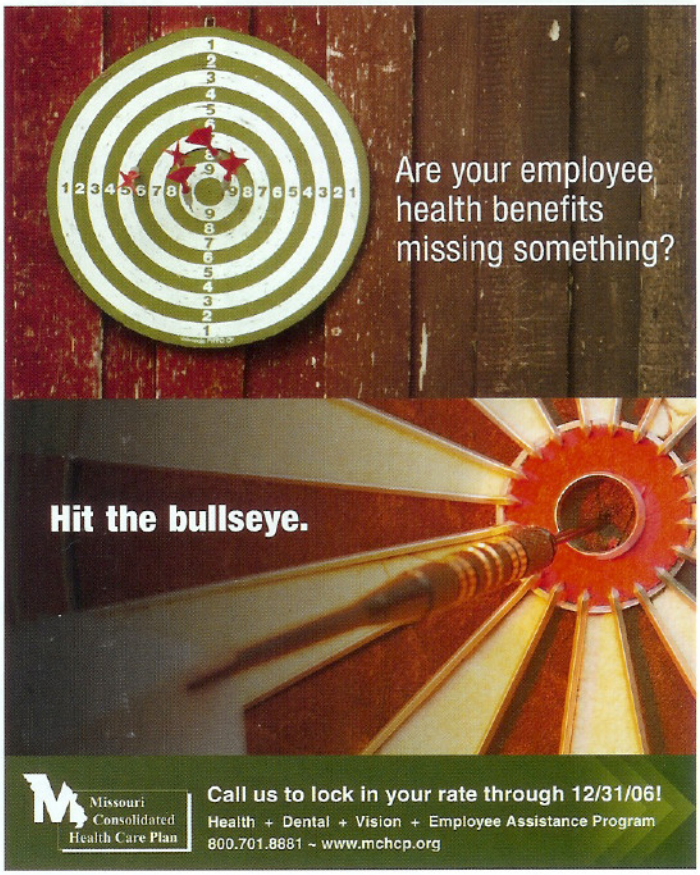

The Center for Entrepreneurship & Outreach. The School of Management & Information Systems at the University of Missouri-Rolla and Extension provide a wide range of management and business development assistance to small businesses to increase their probability of success in entrepreneurial ventures. Services include identifying markets, government contracting, technology commercialization, and partnering with federal government and private business to meet research needs. See: http://umrceo.net/.

For more information about how University of Missouri Extension can help improve the lives of residents in your counties, please contact me at 417-337-0605 or DelongT@missouri.edu.

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Missouri Counties Earn Awards At NACo Conference

Two Missouri counties received awards at the NACo annual conference this year in Honolulu, HI.

Boone County was recognized as being one of the nation's top 10 digital counties. This award was given based on the 2005 Digital Counties Survey, an annual joint study conducted by the Center for Digital Government and NACo. The study recognized the top 10 counties, categorized by population, based on their innovations of digital technology and their utilization of such technology to serve the needs of their constituents. The four "top 10" population categories were: 500,000 or more; 250,000-499,999; 150,000-249,999; and less than 150,000. Boone County received a 5th place ranking among those counties with a population of less than 150,000.

The National Association of County Recorders, Election Officials, and Clerks (NACRC) awarded 2nd Place "Honorable Mention" to Buchanan County for its Student Election Participation Program. The program, facilitated by the Buchanan County clerk's office, encouraged high school students to get involved with the election process. Students involved in the program assisted at polling places during various elections taking place throughout 2004-2005.

In a letter to participating high schools, Buchanan County Clerk Pat Conway emphasized the importance of the program, stating, "The future strength of our community lies with our young people and the degree of civic responsibility we are able to instill in them." The program consisted of 56 total high school participants, six of whom earned scholarships for their outstanding participation and essays reflecting on their experiences.

Congratulations to Boone and Buchanan Counties for their nationally recognized achievements!