

2018
Missouri Agricultural Extension Professionals
Agriculture Leadership Award Winner

Chris Chinn

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As you review nominations for the 2018 MAEP Agricultural Leadership Award, it our belief that you will find Chris Chinn - mother, farmer, strong extension supporter, dedicated advocate for the state's No. 1 industry and current leader of that key industry - a very deserving recipient of the award. With these qualifications and her track record of demonstrating strong and visionary public and private sector leadership, fact-based advocacy for agriculture, and a dedication to the Land Grant System and the agriculture industry. It is our feeling that it will be extremely hard to find a more dedicated agriculture leader and more deserving recipient of the MAEP Leadership Award.

It has been our distinct privilege to work with and for Chris for more than 20 years. She has a well-documented record of visionary leadership, dedicated commitment and genuine appreciation for all aspects of the industry. In addition, she is a strong and dedicated supporter of CAFNR and MU Extension and all they represent as a Land Grant University, educating future generations while assisting current generations of agriculturalists; acquiring and transferring new knowledge to grow Missouri agriculture domestically and internationally; protecting the environment and improving the economic viability and quality of life for all Missourians.

She is recognized by her peers locally, regionally, and nationally for her commitment, leadership and vision. Her efforts to enhance agriculture are rooted in her desire to bring the next generation back to the farm. She is often quoted as saying "my new mission is clear: to protect and promote agriculture in Missouri so that my kids can grow up to be the family's sixth generation of farmers." She and Dr. Stewart have been the leaders of Missouri's Last Mile Broadband effort. When completed this project will have a major impact on the future of Missouri agricultural sector but also the ability of MU Extension to deliver programming.

To receive this honor it is our feeling that an awardee must have made significant contributions to not only the agricultural industry but also the goals and objectives of MU Extension. The goals and objectives for agriculture held by Chris are synonymous with those of MU Extension. Her recognition as one of only four national spokespeople for U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance's "Faces of Farming and Ranching" speaks volumes about her contributions and commitment to the profession and admiration from the industry. Additionally, she has served on the County Extension Council, and worked on Extension Policy at the local, state and national level.

Chris has been identified as a pioneer for her use of social media as an agricultural advocate and has gained national recognition for her efforts to tell the farm story through meaningful conversations and online interactions. Her advocacy efforts have focused on listening to the public and decision makers, understanding their perspective, gathering the facts and responding with factual, real world, research-based answers.

Chris was one of the first farmers who took to Twitter to share snippets of farm life and, in turn, extend an invitation to the public to learn more about her farm and the importance of agriculture. Her use of social media to educate others began in June 2008 with a five minute YouTube video on "The Truth about Modern Hog Production" that had more than 30,000 views. Today she is recognized and trusted nationally and internationally as a reliable and accurate source of agricultural information. Her audience on Twitter has grown to more than 10,000 followers.

As MU Extension strives to touch the lives of future agriculture leaders, so does Chris. As we reflect on her career to date, it is our assessment that it would be extremely difficult to identify a leader, especially one this early in her career, who has made a more significant contribution to the industry and all that CAFNR and MU Extension represents. As a leader, spokeswoman, farmer, volunteer and public servant, she has always been committed to doing everything possible to advocate and educate others about the importance of agriculture. To Chris, agriculture is the stabilizing force and key driver for the state's economy and the foundation for the quality of life that Missourians enjoy in both urban and rural communities. The scope of this vision extends far beyond Missouri's borders. As evidenced by the key leadership roles she has had, Chris is well respected as a visionary industry leader. Her previous experience is now paving the way at the Department of Agriculture.

Under her leadership, the Missouri Department of Agriculture is strategically positioned to lead the industry based on its new strategic vision, MORE, which focuses on feeding MORE, reaching MORE, connecting MORE, and empowering MORE. This vision and the initiatives being led by the Department have already shown a great return. The Department has leveraged partnerships, including with MU Extension, and taken an innovative approach to addressing challenges and opportunities. Strategic partnerships are yielding results in broadband, producer outreach and training, and farmer engagement through the reach MORE tour.

Based on this representative sample of her efforts on behalf of CAFNR, MU Extension and the profession, it is our assessment that Chris has made significant and impactful contributions as an agricultural leader and deserves to be recognized for those contributions by MAEP. We strongly recommend Chris as a deserving recipient of the 2018 MAEP Agricultural Leadership Award and encourage the committee to select her for this recognition.