

FEATURE Story



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Small Steps to a Brighter Tomorrow

Picture in your mind a small rural town. As you thought about it, did you imagine a Mayberry-esque community with white picket fences, kids playing and folks waving to each other?

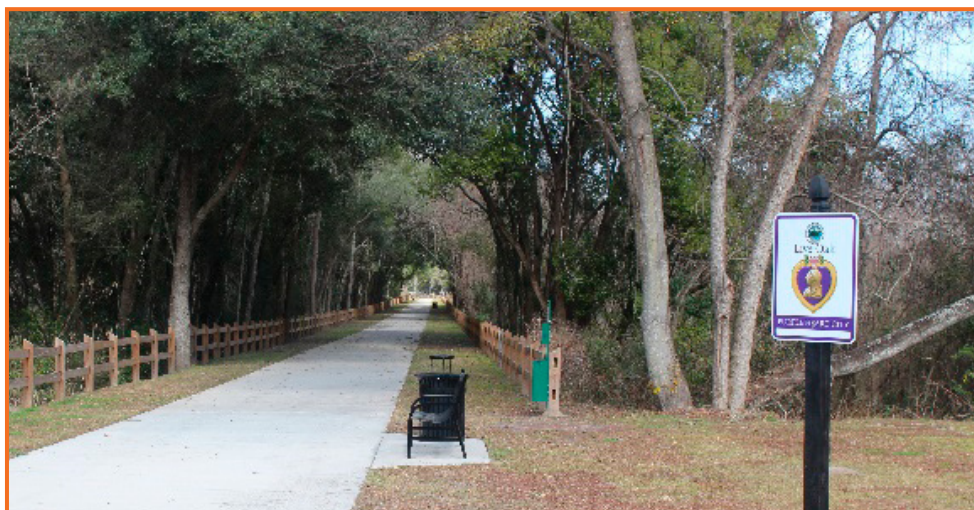
The reality is that for the first time across America, rural communities are facing out-migration, meaning more

people are leaving than are coming in and being born there. Downtowns are being shuttered as small business owners can no longer afford to stay in business. There is a lack of access to services.

Live Oak, in North Florida, found itself in a similar situation. It is a small rural, agricultural community of approximately 7,000 that was finding difficulty keeping jobs and preventing kids from moving to the city to find work. To further complicate matters, Tropical Storm Debby created devastating flooding in 2012 with sinkholes throughout Suwannee County.

The question for community leaders and the citizens became "How do we

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The south end of Heritage Trail links downtown to sidewalks and Heritage Park and Gardens.

February – April 2016

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ALACHUA, BAKER, BRADFORD, CITRUS, CLAY, COLUMBIA, DIXIE, DUVAL, GILCHRIST, HAMILTON, LAFAYETTE, LEVY, MADISON, NASSAU, SUWANNEE, TAYLOR, AND UNION COUNTIES

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(L) New Marketing efforts welcome visitors. (R) A new electronic signboard identifies City Hall while informing about local events and activities.

achieve and sustain community vitality?" Small towns like Live Oak which are facing issues such as poverty, shrinking public funds and changing demographics, look to government for answers. But governments alone cannot solve rural challenges. Seems like a lot of doom and gloom? Well, Live Oak is looking at positive changes in rebuilding their community.

Small steps are the foundation on which to build solutions of greater complexity. A community needs to build acceptance of small changes and then add new features. As users of services within a community experience success and build familiarity with the small steps that are taken, they gain confidence: in the decisions being made by leaders, in suggesting ideas, and in taking part of the change process. Plus, decision makers experience success which in turn increases their confidence.

In cooperation with the UF/IFAS Extension office in Suwannee County and Live Oak's Community Redevelopment Agency, other organizations have started working together. Following are some of the small steps that have been realized since the NAR SmartGrowth grant and the Citizen's Institute on Rural Design began the

design thinking process to rebuild what was once a bustling, thriving town:

- Downtown buildings, condemned after damage from Tropical Storm Debby's sinkhole, were demolished. The site was remediated, sodded, treed and renamed "Festival Park".
- The Chamber of Commerce and the UF/IFAS Extension office is collaborating on a Business Retention and Expansion program which helps to identify priorities to assist existing businesses.
- The Small Business Development Center, through the University of North Florida, hired an Agribusiness consultant, whose office is now located in the Chamber of Commerce.
- Welcome signs have been placed at the city limits to four entrances into Live Oak.
- Heritage Trail was installed to connect the downtown north end with Heritage Park and Gardens on the south end. Pavement, fencing, trees and benches have been installed.
- Sidewalks installed on Helvenston Street provide a safe, walk-able corridor connecting Heritage Trail to Heritage Parks and Gardens.
- Heritage Park and Gardens has expanded its offerings to include a children's play park, a free disc golf course, and horseshoe pits.

- A group of interested citizens and leaders toured the Community Redevelopment Agency in Tallahassee, resulting in additional strategies for utilizing CRA funds as a match for projects.
- A digital sign tower, installed in front of City Hall, provides information about the city and its services as well as information on upcoming events.
- A Farmers Market operates on Tuesdays and Fridays from noon to 6pm at Festival Park.
- At a 4-day Entrepreneurship 4-H Day Camp, youth work through business plans and pitch ideas to a "Shark Tank"-like panel who award monetary start-up prizes.
- The city and county cooperated in funding and hiring a dedicated Economic Development Director and have developed an incentive program to attract new and expanding businesses. This website was created. <http://www.floridasnewfrontier.com/>
- Three new festivals have brought thousands of visitors to the area and help attract potential customers to downtown businesses. These family friendly events also increase the quality of life for our citizens.

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- Speakers and consultants have been brought in to discuss issues and potential solutions during workshops.
- The Leadership Suwannee Program, defunct for over 10 years, was re-stored and revitalized through the Chamber of Commerce.
- A matching grant program, up to \$25,000, was offered through the CRA to renovate vacant spaces into downtown housing.
- Over 30 businesses downtown have taken advantage of the CRAs façade improvement grant.
- The Tourism Development Council and the Chamber of Commerce joined forces for a promotional video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kZee2hB6Lo&feature=youtu.be>
- The Spirit of the Suwannee Music Park and Campground designed and built a treehouse featured on the Treehouse Guys television show. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0XCsn6XD14>
- Crepe Myrtle trees have been planted to adorn the downtown corridor.

The progress does not stop there. Talks are underway for constructing restrooms downtown. The South end expansion of the Heritage Trail which will link it to the Ichetucknee River is slated to begin this year. A defunct shopping plaza on the East side of town is being considered for purchase and renovation into a mixed use property to locate housing and retail. Attention

is also being directed on infrastructure development. Currently, there is a commercial park to the East of downtown. Extending water and sewer will make the location more attractive to development or expansion.

Now, picture in your mind a small rural town that is in the process of making small steps to rebuild their community and celebrate success. Live Oak, Florida, is that community. This is a place where residents are waving to one another as they visit new shops and restaurants and where hope now lingers in the air.

From the DISTRICT DIRECTOR



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Can you cook for 5? Can you cook for 500?

"Transferring research results from small plots to a commercial operation is like pretending you can cook for 5 and for 500, too", taught to me by a tomato researcher from South Florida. Indeed, there seems to be a fundamental incompatibility between the care and attention given to a few tomato plants in a trial that covers a fraction of one acre and that given to the thousands of tomato plants (typically 5,000 per acre) in a commercial field. That makes about 250,000 plants in a 50-acre planting. As small-plot researchers, we looked at

and scouted our few tomato plants one-by-one, every day. Scouting in a commercial field is done with a brisk walk and most tomato plants don't get looked at until harvest (not to mention that now drones can be used to scout fields). I always found this analogy humbling.

The serving staff of the "La Fonda" restaurant by the Olympic Port in Barcelona was busy on this unusually warm Saturday before Christmas. Obviously, an army of additional servers had been assembled for this day of local celebration. Eating out is a big deal in Europe. Guests were welcomed, directed to their tables; drinks were selected, delivered to the table while the many plates of the one-size-fits-all menu for that day were coming (full) and leaving (empty): "a baby chair here", "another knife at table 6", "table 54 is ready for desert". In the restaurant room, aisles and tables were a total contrast. The activity in the aisle was that of a bee hive. At the table, everything

was calm: guests were smiling, enjoying fellowship and getting louder and louder as the meal progressed. Everyone was having a good time and a pleasant experience. I asked the manager: how many people are you going to serve today? He smiled and told me "Two services, 250 to 300 people each".

Then the tomato plants flashed in my mind: they are cooking for 500 and they are treating every customer like he or she was the only one in the whole room. That is S-E-R-V-I-C-E. Then another flash: our service, the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, does the same thing - just year round: quality individualized attention to 17 million Floridians - every day. You are Extension, and you provide the service. Yes, each and all of you can cook for 500 with the attention reserved to groups of 5. Happy New Year and keep up the good work!

SUCCESS Stories



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Letting go for a good reason

Volunteers are a crucial part of our 4-H organization, and when we can turn a county program over to a qualified volunteer, we have been successful in our training and guidance. Teen Leadership Council (TLC) is a leadership council that provides young people with an opportunity to develop life skills such as leadership, communication, character building and community awareness. Each year this council also chooses a teen trend that is affecting youth today and throughout the year. They evaluate all aspects of it, even bringing in guest speakers and hosting an event to bring awareness and knowledge to the trend. This council has been successful in evaluating and educating others in the areas of Texting, Bullying and Positive Outlooks/Motivation. As an example, the TLC members were able to talk with and/or distribute Bullying information to approximately 10,500 youth and adults who attended the Clay County Fair.



A member of the Teen Leadership Council demonstrates communications skills as he shares information with the public.

In 2015, the agent was approached by a seasoned leader who had not renewed a club charter during the previous year. Instead, this leader had stepped down to be the new advisor to the TLC. The leader was a very capable leader, but had tired as the support from parents lessened in their 4-H club. On the other hand, TLC, while doing ok, was in need of a jump start as well. The agent thought this a great opportunity to provide the leader with a group that would be supportive to her and would provide a new energy the council needed. The first two meetings were a difficult transition, not only for the previously advising 4-H agent, but also the youth

and the new advisor. TLC membership decreased dramatically to six members. The agent stepped in for support, speaking with the leader to reassure her to give the kids time to adjust. They discussed how the leader could step out of the agent's footprints with TLC and how she could make TLC "hers". In addition, the agent talked with the kids about change and growth, encouraged them to be open and adventurous, and reminded them of the coping skills they developed while on the council. Month three was different: the leader walked in with new confidence and ownership, and more kids attended and participated at the meeting. Youth began to embrace the change of leadership and re-energize. The leader and the members of TLC began to develop a cohesive team, level of trust and respect.

As agents, we cannot do all things. However, delegating or letting go of programs is hard. If we have trained and worked with our volunteers so much that they are willing to step into a leadership role such as advisor to an active and sometimes stressful Teen Leadership Council, it is a good accomplishment. It is also necessary for not only the volunteers' growth, personally and programmatically, but also the growth of the agent, the young people on the council and the 4-H program as a whole.



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Success Stories 101

My, doesn't time fly. It's my turn to share a success story, but first I'd like to take this opportunity to make some general comments. Having recently served on the IFAS Tenure/Permanent Status and Promotion Committee for two years, I've read a lot of success stories in the packets. Please note that if the packet is not going to this committee, verify with the CED and DED for specific directions. However, if the

packet is going to the committee, here are some suggestions for the success stories.

- The success stories need to convey what participants have done, not what the agent did or accomplished. The agent describes his/her activities in the educational methods section.

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Success Stories 101...continued from previous page

- The question to be addressed is: "How did the participant(s) use the information presented to change or improve their practice or behavior?"
- Since the committee is reading a large number of these packets, brevity is appreciated. The narration of the impact can be stated in a few sentences.

Now I'll share a couple of my own recent programmatic success stories. The description of participants' own success often far exceeds what agents could have scripted or hoped to achieve.

- A Financial Fitness program participant enrolled in the class for a second time and reported that she wanted to review all the money management suggestions presented. She was currently in the process of purchasing

a home with money she had saved from following many of the options presented in the "Finding Money to Save" session.

- Another recent participant, a veteran who had stated during the sessions that he "really didn't think this money management applied to him", requested that he be allowed to come speak at the next series of classes. He emphatically told the class to "listen to the Doc, she knows what she's talking about!" He related that he did the budgeting exercise of recording his expenditures, added up how much money his smoking habit was costing him, and QUIT. He now, for the first time, had a savings account and money in his pocket....and a huge smile on his face.

Sharing success story endorsements with co-workers, advisory committee members and in social media will create interest in agents' programs. In my own case, because participants in "ServSafe" classes speak favorably about the review session prior to the exam, several companies regularly register their employees for the classes. This generates revenue as well as a positive programming reputation. So, don't underestimate the value and persuasive power of success stories. They provide recognition for both the participant and the agent.

How Does the **UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA** Work?



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Are you using the correct definition of multi-state activities when filling up your FAR?

The Faculty Activity reports (FARs) serve as UF/IFAS' primary source document when making timely faculty payroll distributions. These distributions, which impact IFAS-specific Capacity funds (formerly federal formula funds), are based on an agent's reasonable estimates of activities, recognizing that research, instruction, and extension are often inextricably intertwined.

Without accurately capturing and spending these IFAS-specific Capacity funds, UF/IFAS stands to lose millions in faculty support. One of the Capacity grants that UF/IFAS is in danger of losing is Smith Lever and Hatch Multistate funds. UF/IFAS is required to spend at least 25% of its Smith-Lever dollars on multistate activities.

This is where each agent can help and correctly report their multi-state activities. In the context of reporting activities to the Feds, multistate means collaborative activities with at least two states or territories. Collaboration can occur in person or by email, phone or other forms of communication in all three facets of extension programs - planning, delivery and evaluation.

Examples include:

- developing curriculum across state lines

- hosting a multi-state activity that has been developed by collaborators
- participating in eXtension
- providing information to another state's fact sheet or newsletter
- developing shared websites
- working together on a research project that includes an extension component across state lines
- performing service and leadership roles in regional/national professional societies, regional/national panels, and/or USDA related activities (reviews of grant proposals, out-of-state unit reviews, ...).

This definition does NOT include simple attendance at regional/national meetings, with or without presentations.

So, you need not be physically out-of-the state to be engaged in legitimate, multi-state activities. In making your tally, remember that 1% = 2 days.

TEACHING Tips



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Thinking versus Feeling

Third in a series of Four: Teaching to Different Personality Types

In previous articles, we discussed that whether or not you're sitting in a conference room or out in the field, an extension program participant's interests and ways of learning directly affect how he or she takes in and processes information. Therefore, we need to consider different teaching approaches based on the needs of who is sitting in the room. While we don't always know the personality type of our learners based on inventories such as the Myers Brigg Type Inventory or MBTI, we can assume that we have a variety of types in the room every time we present information. Ensuring our approaches are applicable to all types can assist in knowledge and skill transfer and hopefully inspire our participants to take and implement what we are teaching.

Previously, we discussed extraverts/introverts and sensing/intuitive types and their associated needs. In this article, we will discuss people with a thinking versus a feeling type, which describes the way we make decisions. Learners who prefer thinking make decisions based on impersonal, objective logic. These individuals need opportunities to step back to get an objective view. They should be allowed to analyze a situation, given time to discuss cause and effect as it relates to what they are learning, and should be allowed to solve problems with logic. Because of this need, as educators, we need to provide facts and logical explanations that will allow them to make informed decisions. Role playing activities resonate well with this type of learner as they like to "solve" problems by objectively looking at facts and coming to their own solutions. Learners with a thinking preference also enjoy being presented with a complex task, both individually or as a group. Consider creating scenarios needing to be solved that can be presented before, during or after your program to entice the thinking personality type.

On the other hand, learners who prefer feeling make their decisions based on

personal priorities and relationships. These learners are more empathetic and are largely guided by personal and group values. They are more likely to make decisions based on how the decision impacts people rather than on objective logic. When developing programs it is important to remember that those with a feeling personality type are not going to be as engaged in "solving" a problem with logic but rather want to discuss the social side of a complex issue. By allowing time to discuss or reflect upon the ramifications decision-making in your topic area can have on families, friends and communities, you will appeal to the learners exhibiting a feeling type.

Remember, as educators, we tend to rely heavily on our own preferences and style when developing programs. By keeping in mind that you have both thinking and feeling type learners, and making programmatic choices based upon that knowledge, you can make even more impact with your extension programs.

What's WORKING?



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Healthy Eaters, Strong Minds

With childhood diabetes and obesity rates on a rapid rise, many parents, teachers, and concerned citizens feel a moral imperative to support children in developing healthy eating habits. In addition to the grave health implications of a poor diet, children who are hungry or poorly nourished do less well in school, both academically and behaviorally. As concern rises, policy makers and teachers in the classroom are searching for the most effective ways

to improve the health and wellbeing of their students.

Schools provide us with a great place to start tackling this challenge. Eating habits and preferences are established early. The most effective way to increase children's intake of fruits and vegetables and encourage lifelong healthful eating habits is to teach them in school, early on, about healthy

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Healthy Eaters, Strong Minds...continued from previous page



Students learn about growing food in hands-on gardening classes.

choices and nutrition concepts. Studies show that if positive habits are established before sixth grade, they are more likely to persist into adulthood.

The Taylor County Extension Service is tackling this concern one nutrition class at a time. Through the UF/IFAS Food Nutrition Program, students in grades K-4th are learning about the importance of eating healthy foods. Weekly classes are taught at Perry

Primary and Taylor Elementary Schools, and students are learning about MyPlate, food groups, vitamins, and the importance of being active. In hands-on gardening classes, students are also being taught about how to grow food. Students get to sample produce right from the garden and experience the excitement of harvesting their very own crops.

COMMUNITY Development



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Right Place, Right Time = Great Opportunity

Four years ago a couple of our Master Gardener (MG) volunteers and I were invited to tour the grounds of a run down, over grown estate that was purchased with a Florida Communities Trust Grant. The 77 acre site was once the home of the P.C. Crapps family, but had been vacant for several years before our visit. Our own Prissy Fletcher, Horticulture Agent in Putnam County, is one of the granddaughters of P.C. Crapps and shared with me some fond family memories as a child going to the estate.

As the MGs and I walked around, we got more and more excited about the potential for garden development and educational opportunities. Eventually, a couple of the MG volunteers and I became active members of the Friends of Heritage Park and Gardens (HPG)

board. That decision was a “win-win” for the Suwannee County Extension’s Horticulture program, the local community and me.

The landscape surrounding the house was originally designed by renowned landscape architect Richard Foerster who designed projects such as the Ravines State Park in Palatka, Florida. Trying to poke their limbs out from under the invasive vines were azaleas, camellias and gardenias. My favorite feature was a long, striking arbor with stone pillars. Wow, we thought, so many opportunities, where do we start?

First on our list of opportunities was to teach people about invasive plants and how to get rid of them. We offered

several workshops and invited people from the local garden club, Florida Trails Association and the Sparkleberry Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society to participate in these “learn by doing” workshops. We also determined that a series of pruning workshops would benefit the plants, so again we invited groups including Rotary, Kiwanis and a professional association of realtors group along with the other organizations to come out and hone their pruning skills. These workshops provided leadership opportunities to the veteran MGs who led work crews. As the grounds were getting cleaned up, landscape design opportunities arose. We were able to get help from an Extension Specialist on campus and enlist the services of a couple of her graduate students. MGs were able to learn design techniques and implement our mantra of right plant, right place. We have enhanced the event garden and are developing several new gardens: wildlife, pet memorial, herb and rose gardens. By working with the Friends of HPG finance committee, we have found other people to help fund our gardens.

The community has come to value HPG as a cultural center where they



Master Gardeners pose by the entrance to the ‘wildlife garden’ which is now being developed.

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Right Place, Right Time = Great Opportunity...continued from previous page

can bring family, friends and out of town visitors. People use the house and grounds for family reunions, weddings, business retreats or for just eating lunch in a tranquil, relaxing atmosphere. There are educational workshops for the general public on gardening, art, history and community development. Agents from UF/IFAS Extension use the grounds and house for meetings, workshops, 4-H Special Interest clubs and a teaching lab for the Forest Ecology State contest. The Suwannee High school track team adopted the grounds as their home track and shared how much they love to run in this inspiring setting. Large events like a civil war re-enactment, a Christmas festival and an Easter

egg hunt are becoming increasingly popular with people in the community. Local businesses have benefitted from increased events, building projects or maintaining the facilities. Through our partnership with the Parks and Recreation Department, we have obtained grants to build an 18-hole disc golf park, horseshoe courts and a children's playground. We have met this year to get started on incorporating a dog park on the property, which I am really excited about since I have three large dogs that love to run.

I feel really fortunate to learn a variety of leadership skills from the community oriented board members of HPG. I have observed great vision, tactful

handling of politicians and incredible organizational skills demonstrated by community leaders. We have formed new partnerships and strengthened old ones. The other HPG board members have learned how much UF/IFAS Extension has to offer and have shared that information within their networks. Additionally, the MGs and I have a "playground" to try new plants and cultivars. We also have a boundless garden venue to facilitate fun and interesting workshops that keep people coming back for more educational experiences. I am one lucky Extension Agent to be at the right place at the right time in this garden adventure.

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