

Cooperative Extension Community Issues Program

Dr. Bill McGowan

Background

It is to the extension department of [the land-grant] colleges, if properly conducted, that we must now look for the most effective rousing of the people on the land. . . . It is of the greatest consequence that the people of the open country should learn to work together, not only for the purpose of forwarding their economic interests and of competing with other men who are organizing, but also to develop themselves and to establish an effective community spirit. (Commission on Country Life 1909/1911: 128)



The County Agent – Norman Rockwell

20 Years Later

“There is a new leaven at work in rural America. It is stimulating to better endeavor in farming and home making, bringing rural people together in groups for social intercourse and study, solving community and neighborhood problems, fostering better relations and common endeavor

between town and country, bringing recreation, debate, pageantry, the drama and art into the rural community, developing cooperation and enriching the life and broadening the vision of rural men and women. This new leaven is the cooperative extension work of the state agricultural colleges and the federal Department of Agriculture, which is being carried on in cooperation with the counties and rural people throughout the United States.” (Smith and Wilson 1930: 1)

Program Objective

Community issues education prepares citizens to engage in complex public issues of widespread concern in ways that lead to more informed decisions.

The principle objectives are as follows:

- Increase citizens knowledge about issues
- Assist citizens in determining appropriate and effective strategies for public decision-making.
- Help citizens craft, evaluate and implement alternative solutions.
- Build skills and provide opportunities to enhance citizens' effective participation in public decision-making processes.

Current program activities

Latino community

- New Horizons
A housing and agricultural cooperative initiative

Health care

- La Red Health Center (board member)
La Red recently received federally qualified health center (FQHC) status. La Red serves the under and uninsured citizens of the county.

Sussex County and Towns

- Sussex Conservation District (board member)
 - Stormwater program development

- Sussex Conference planning committee (planner/presenter)
Premier conference in Sussex County that focuses on County issues.
- One Sussex
An EPA grant to work with Sussex County on the update of the current land use plan
- Center for the Inland Bays (board member)
- Rehoboth Beach Architectural Review Board Study Committee (facilitator)

State of Delaware

- Transfer of development rights committee – Department of Agriculture (facilitator)
- Delaware Solid Waste Authority and Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) Path Forward meetings (facilitator)
- DNREC Air and Waste Management - Delaware National Golf Course Site
- DE Dept of Transportation – Sussex County Long Range Transportation Plan

*Public Work—
the visible,
creative efforts
of a mix of
people that
produces things
of lasting
importance to
our communities
and our society.*

**Scott Peters
Cornell University**

Collaborations

- Senior Fellow – University of Delaware Institute for Public Administration
- NEMO – Joe Farrell, Marine Advisory Service – College of Marine Studies
- Broadkill River Pollution Control Strategy development – Joe Farrell, MAS
- 3 College Coastal Communities Enhancement Initiative – CHEPP, Marine and Earth Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources

Workshops and facilitation

- Leaderful Community Workshop I – Community leadership is a significant issue. Homeowner associations will continue to need skills in group process, decision-making, conflict resolution and dialogue.
- Leaderful Community Workshops II – intensive hands on workshop in the community. Participants must have attended LC – I
- Community Life Workshop – A 2-day workshop on how to hold and moderate town hall discussions.
- Issue Framing workshop – A 2 day workshop on how to frame a local issue for discussion.
- Adult learner workshop – A 4-day workshop for anyone who works with adult learners.
- Facilitation, strategic planning and visioning for organizations.

Projects – Recently Completed

- Strategic Visioning
 - Town of Greenwood, Christ Church, Dover DE,
- Facilitation
 - National Association of State Foresters, Chesapeake Fields Institute, Garrison Lake Golf Course Site, Rehoboth Beach Comprehensive plan workshops, Sussex County and Department of Transportation SR1 study, Bowerset groundwater meeting, Nanticoke River Pollution Control Strategy, ,
- Collaborative projects
 - Delaware Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Stormwater Maintenance strategic plan, Inland Bays Pollution Control Strategy, Lewes Comprehensive Plan