

The Female Touch

Women Are Playing A Bigger Role In Agribusiness

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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As an Extension specialist, Robin Salverson helps women understand how to run farm and ranch operations. However, she also puts her lessons into practice.

"I grew up in north-central South Dakota, and my family still farms there," she said. "Today, I actively work on a ranch in the Buffalo area outside of my Extension work at the Lemmon office."

Salverson, along with Adele Harty of Rapid City, coordinate and teach "Annie's Project" in South Dakota. The national Extension program provides a six-week course that offers both information and inspiration. The main areas cover production, financial, human, legal and marketing.

In Nebraska, Cheryl Griffith serves as the Annie's Project coordinator. The program forms part of her work with the state's Women In Agriculture (WIA) program, which teaches risk management. She has been on board with the WIA program in Nebraska for about 18 months.

Griffith and Salverson point to Annie's Project's greatest benefit: networking.

By coming together, rural women — who often find themselves geographically or socially isolated — realize they are not alone in dealing with daily stress.

"These women are juggling so many different things in their lives. They are active not only with their farms and ranches but also their families, activities, outside jobs and social lives," Salverson said. "We give them the ability to say, 'OK, I'm under a lot of pressure. How do I deal with it?'"

The women-only setting creates a light-hearted environment where participants feel more comfortable asking questions, she said.

The course stresses not only business tools and goal setting — both business and personal — but also the crucial importance of connecting with those around you, Salverson said.

"(Communication) extends beyond husband and wife. It affects everyone differently on the farm and ranch — the sons and daughters, the in-laws, the hired man," she said. "It's really important when it comes to estate planning and transferring ownership from one generation to the next. Even people who now live off the farm and no longer have it, they still may have a son or daughter living on the place. Our advice — don't ignore any of these persons."

Salverson and Griffith point to the rapidly-changing role of women in agriculture. Today, women act as full-fledged partners in every sense of the word.

In many cases, women are the lone operators, Griffith said from her Lincoln, Neb., office.

"The role of women in agriculture production has changed dramatically, not just since the WIA Conference (in Nebraska) started in 1985, but just in the last 10 years," she said. "They are not considered 'farm wives' but instead farm partners — making decisions with their husbands or business partners. Women are sole owners of nearly one-third of all agricultural land in Nebraska."

Salverson sees the same changes in South Dakota.

"They are helping make decisions and understanding what is happening with the marketing of livestock or the financing aspect," she said. "Traditionally, women have been just the bookkeepers. But now, more of them are wanting to become much more involved in the decision-making process of farming and ranching."

DRAWING UP A PLAN

That's where Annie's Project comes into play.

Annie's Project is based on the life of a farm woman who grew up in a small town in northern Illinois. Annie spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved business partner with her farm husband. This project shares her experiences with farm women living and working in a complex business.

The six 3-hour workshops combine lectures, discussions, individual and small group work, computer work and audio/visual support. The topics include risk, financial statements, understanding personalities, marketing plans, business plans, estate planning, spreadsheets and technology.

As a result of this education,



COURTESY PHOTO
Cheryl Griffith, state program coordinator for Nebraska's "Women In Agriculture" (WIA) program, enjoys some playful time with her dogs. In her WIA role, Griffith also coordinates "Annie's Project" in the Husker State.

women become confident members of the management team for their operation.

The courses draw a wide variety of farm and ranch women, Salverson said. Some have lived their entire lives on a farm or ranch, while others married into an operation with absolutely no previous rural background.

Even within a rural setting, the women bring a wide variety of experiences to the classes, Salverson said.

Some women are actively involved with the hands-on operation — at times, operating it alone because of death, divorce, inheritance or by purchasing the farm or ranch. Other women may not work with the day-to-day operations, but they provide support on the farm. Often, they hold a job not only for the salary but for the benefits such as health insurance.

"We have some women who don't live on a farm or ranch, but they ag-related jobs in town," she said. "Then we have women with jobs in town unrelated to agriculture, but they know that ag production has an impact on their jobs and they want to increase their knowledge."

In South Dakota, the program uses not only the two Extension instructors but also business and other community members as outside resources. Their areas of expertise include conservation, banking, estate planners, crop insurance and marketing.

"With the financial issues, we cover cash flow, balance sheets and income statements. We also go through Quicken, which is a computer program for financial record keeping," Salverson said. "On the marketing side, we teach about the futures. They learn the lingo, and we have them track the market."

The women put their knowledge to quick use, Salverson said.

"We had one lady who was marketing some grain with her husband, and it gave her a better understanding," she said. "A lot of times, we hear the women say, 'I wish my husband attended this with me (and

heard this information). We know they are going home and talking about it with their husbands."

The Annie's Program in Nebraska is structured much like other states, especially the program in South Dakota, Griffith said.

"With renewed excitement, I can tell you that we are jump-starting our Annie's program in Nebraska and are planning on approximately eight classes this upcoming winter," she said. "Most of the classes will be the traditional Annie's Project which addresses the five areas of risk management. A couple of classes will be using the new component, 'Managing for Today and Tomorrow.'"

The Nebraska program has drawn interest from a number of supporters, Griffith said.

"I do have facilitators interested statewide, including a few from the northeast part of the state," she said. "We are doing this with the sponsorship of our new partner in Annie's, Farm Credit Services of America."

Farm Credit Services has likewise played an important sponsorship role in South Dakota, Salverson said. The financial support has allowed Annie's Project to hold down its registration fee. The White River program charged \$150, when the actual cost was \$225.

The South Dakota program started in 2007 with courses in Buffalo and Timber Lake, thanks to a grant. The grant has ended, and other sources are sought to help offset expenses such as the travel costs for presenters.

The South Dakota program tries to limit each site to about two dozen participants and has served about 250 women so far, Salverson said.

East River classes have been held at Aurora, Chamberlain, Salem, Sisseton, Miller, Redfield, Selby and Bowdle. West River classes have been held at White River, Buffalo, Timber Lake, McIntosh, Martin, Sturgis and Union Center.

Besides the standard Annie's Project program, Salverson has tweaked the curriculum to reflect local needs and concerns, based on feedback from the participants.

"We have more livestock concerns in West River, and more crop concerns in East River," she said. "Because Annie's Project started in Illinois, it was heavily crops and agronomy. We added more livestock for South Dakota."

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Annie's Project works hand in hand with other WIA programs in the Husker State, Griffith said.

"The Women in Agriculture Program in Nebraska itself is a unique one," she said. "The WIA Conference is sponsored by University of Nebraska Extension and the Department of Ag Economics and is in its 28th year. The 2013 Conference will be Feb. 21-22 in Kearney and will feature speakers Jolene Brown, Temple Grandin, and R.P. Smith."

The WIA conference, like Annie's Project, offers valuable information, Griffith said.

"Last year, we had more than 400 participants who attended 30 different workshops," she said. "(The workshops covered) subjects such as crop insurance, commodity marketing, financial planning, business transition and succession, family communication, beef genetics and crop production and many more."

Besides her work with Annie's Project, Griffith is busy getting the WIA conference lined up.

"The most important aspect of the conference for the participants is the networking they are able to do. In fact, we plan time so they have the opportunity to start the networking process," she said. "At the end of every conference, the participants go home reinvigorated with lots of new information to share with their partners. We are totally supported by participant fees and donations from our various sponsors."

After attending Annie's Project and the Women in Ag Conference, women feel more empowered to take on a role as business partners, Griffith said.

"Many women find a new-found confidence to take equal part in the daily operations and decisions on the farm or ranch, as well as seek out and assume leadership positions in their community and the agriculture industry," she said.

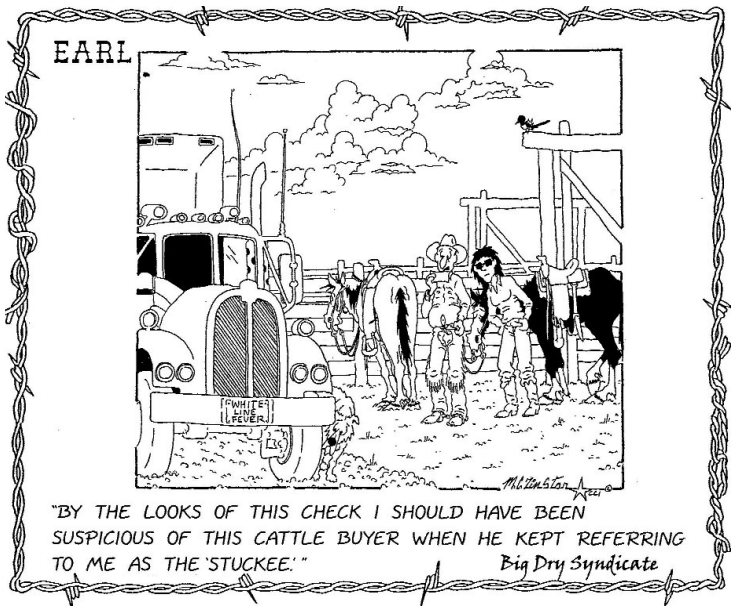
Salverson sees many of the same results in the Rushmore State.

"This has been a positive experience for women," she said. "Even when the course ended and we were no longer meeting, networking was still occurring among these women. Some lived 60 or 100 miles apart, but they were still connected with each other."

Salverson herself has gained from Annie's Project.

"It's really been a wonderful program," she said. "I have been with Extension for 12 years, and this has been an experience where you learn as much from the women as they learn from us."

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf



Hay To Be Removed From Rights Of Way

PIERRE — The South Dakota Department of Transportation requires the cooperation of all farmers and ranchers in removing processed hay from the highway right of way.

State regulations require that hay be removed from the right of way within 30 days of being processed, but no later than Oct. 1.

Removing hay bales from the highway right of way is an important safety consideration for motorists. The bales or stacks can be a safety hazard for vehicles forced to leave the road and, in some cases, can restrict a driver's sight distance. Hay left in the road ditches late in the year can also cause snowdrifts across the highway.

For more information, contact Jason Humphrey at 605-773-3571.

South Dakota Workshops Begin Oct. 12

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension Community Development is offering Growing Leaders:SD workshops in three locations in South Dakota in October. The one-day workshop will focus on building individual leadership skills and how to apply those skills to group and community work.

The workshops will be held at the Mueller Center in Hot Springs on Friday, Oct. 12; at MTI Technology Center in Mitchell on Wednesday, Oct. 24 in Mitchell and at the Groton Community Center in Groton on Thursday, Oct. 25. All of the programs will be from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time.

SDSU Extension has partnered with local groups to deliver these workshops, including the Fall River Young Professionals Group, the Mitchell Area Chamber of Commerce, the Mitchell Technical Institute and the Groton Area Next Generation group. The program is also supported by the South Dakota Rural Electric Association.

The cost to attend the program is \$75 for early bird registrations received by Oct. 1, 2012. Registrations after Oct. 1 are \$99 per person. Individuals who are part of the local partner groups will receive a discounted early bird rate of \$60 per person, if postmarked by Oct. 1.

For registrations, contact Cheryl Jacobs, SDSU Extension Field Specialist at Cheryl.jacobs@sdstate.edu or call 605-626-2870 or contact your nearest Regional Extension Center.

Farm-Worker Housing Grants Are Available

WASHINGTON — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced that USDA is accepting applications for technical assistance grants to develop domestic and migrant farm labor housing.

"These grants will help communities submit quality applications to increase their chances of getting funding to build much-needed affordable housing for farm workers," Vilsack said. "Increasing the supply of affordable housing in rural communities not only helps the residents, it helps the entire community."

Grants are available to organizations that will help housing authorities, state and local governments, Indian tribes, non-profit organizations, and community- and faith-based groups apply for loans and grants to build farmworker housing. The purpose of the grants is to increase the number of high-quality applications USDA receives. Vilsack announced on July 18 the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for loans and grants to build or preserve affordable rental farm worker housing. This technical assistance funding is to organizations that assist potential borrowers under that NOFA.

Technical assistance grantees must have the knowledge, ability, expertise or practical experience necessary to develop and package farm labor housing loan and grant applications. They also will be required to submit a minimum number of applications to USDA, based on their location.

For additional information, see page 54877 of the Sept. 6 Federal Register, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2012-09-06/html/2012-21885.htm>. The deadline for submitting applications is Nov. 5, 2012.

AVERA RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

RURAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY VITALITY

OCTOBER 4, 2012

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CONFERENCE: 8:30 A.M. – 4 P.M.

Sioux Falls Convention Center

Registration fee: \$35 per person, includes lunch

Join Avera as we focus on strengthening rural communities through economic development and community health initiatives.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Keith J. Mueller, PhD

- Dr. Mueller is a Gerhard Hartman Professor and head of the Department of Health Management and Policy, College of Public Health, University of Iowa, Iowa City.
- He is also the director of the Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis.
- His presentation will illustrate the evolution of health care delivery and the importance of partnerships in sustaining high-quality care in rural areas.


Other Topics and Demonstrations

- Inspiring Excellence: The Successful Impact of Low Employee Turnover Rate
- Panel: The Power of Partnerships — Rural Workforce Recruitment
- Rural Health Care Policy Update From Washington, D.C.
- Community Reinvestment Through the Transfer of Wealth

If you have questions or special needs, please contact the Avera Rural Health Institute at (605) 322-4734.

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To register online, go to www.Avera.org/RuralHealthConference.



AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE

WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Monday, October 1
7:40 a.m. Yankton County Comm (Bruce Jensen, Allen Sinclair)
8:15 a.m. Fire Safety Week (Tom Kurtenbach, Rodney Veldhuizen)

Tuesday, October 2
7:40 a.m. Yankton Library (Kathy Jacobs)
8:15 a.m. Cleaning for a Reason (Sherry Soukup)
8:45 a.m. Dakota Territorial Museum (Crystal Nelson)



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