The 100th anniversary of the County Agent

Many of us have some very nostalgic sentiments regarding the title “The County Agent.” The title can conjure fond memories of the cover of the Saturday Evening Post painted by Norman Rockwell, which was printed in July 24, 1948.

It is interesting to note Mr. Rockwell used real people as models and he used a real County Agent whose name was Herald K. Rippey who actually served as an agent in Jay County, Indiana. Apparently Mr. Rockwell followed Mr. Rippey around as the agent conducted his normal tasks such as culling chickens, determining important livestock qualities, and soil testing. According to Mr. Rockwell, after following the agent around for the day he was “worn to a nubbin.” This full day experience with Extension agent Rippey caused Mr. Rockwell to develop a great admiration for the job of County Agent. Agent Rippey selected a local 4-H family (the Steeds) from Portland, Indiana as the family farm to visit since everyone in the family was actively involved in Extension and 4-H. I had a print framed, and hung it in my office to remind me of the humble beginnings of the Extension program over 100 years ago.

Much has changed over the last hundred years, but many aspects of the County Agent’s job are essentially the same. Each County Agent, regardless of their specific area of expertise, provides the best research information from their respective university.

Remember, each state of the union has at least one land grant university. The Federal government granted them the land and commissioned each to build the university and get the research out to the public. How can the universities do that? They take their Extension faculty and extend them or “loan” them to the counties to provide practical, applied science for their daily lives. These universities include Rutgers, Cornell, Ohio State, Purdue, Texas A&M, University of California, etc. But remember, all 50 states have land grant universities. Here in Florida, we have two land grant universities—University of Florida and Florida A&M. We have 67 counties in Florida and all 67 of them have at least one faculty from University of Florida or Florida A&M.

In the early years, Nassau County only had one County Agent. This County Agent did agriculture, youth, horticulture, everything! As the years passed, 4-H Youth Development and Home Economics, which is now Family Consumer Science (FCS), were included. Currently, we have two 4-H Youth Development agents, one Agriculture/Natural Resource agent, one Family Consumer Science Agent and one Environmental Horticulture agent. As County Extension Director, I oversee all program areas including my specialty, which is Environmental Horticulture. As the next few weeks follow, we will be introducing you to the specific aspects of each program area so you can become more familiar with what our job entails. We have indeed come a long way from the Norman Rockwell “County Agent” but you will also see there are several things which never change. Our deep desire to provide the residents of Nassau County with the most accurate and current information they need to find “solutions for their lives.”

This is the first in a series of columns celebrating the 100th anniversary of the County Extension Service program. Rebecca Jords, UF/IFAS County Extension Director for Nassau County and Nassau County Horticulture Agent III, is a University of Florida faculty member.

While we have reached hundreds of Nassau County citizens through our speaker program, we know there are many others who haven’t been reached. Almost everyone is a member of some group.

Please suggest to your program director, or whomever, to contact us and arrange for one of our speakers to address your group. We can customize our presentations to fit your group’s age and time.

You can contact us by email (svcsيلة@gmail.com) or call us at 310-3226. Seniors vs. Crime is a special project of the Florida Attorney General with offices throughout the state of Florida. The local office is in the Fernandina Police Department at 1255 Lime St. We can be contacted at 310-3226 Tuesdays or Thursdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. or call and leave a voice-mail and we will return your call.


crime prevention

CHUCK SHEEHAN
Seniors Versus Crime

One of the primary objectives of the Seniors vs. Crime project is to educate the public on how to avoid becoming a victim of fraud and scams.

We do this by two primary methods:
1. Newspaper articles.
2. Group presentations.

The latter is preferable as it allows opportunities for feedback and questions from the audience. Over the last five years we have made many presentations to civic groups, church groups, homeowner associations, employee groups, etc.

These presentations are well received and the feedback has been favorable. More importantly we hear back from attendees who call and thank us for saving them from becoming victims.