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Virginia
Association of

Agricultural Extension Agents



VAAEA Newsletter

Winter 2006

From the President's Desk

Keith Dickinson, President, VAAEA

As I write this article, Winter has finally arrived in Virginia and forecasts are calling for our first true winter storm of the year this weekend. I guess that we shouldn't complain, since this is the first week of February! This has certainly been a warmer than usual winter season, which I'm sure is a welcome change for some from the rather cold seasons we have had of late. For Extension purposes, the mild January was a relief for agents throughout Virginia, whom did not have to worry about snow dates for winter educational meetings.

February also marks an important time for members of the Virginia Association of Agricultural Extension Agents. There are several opportunities for members to volunteer for service at the state and national level. There are also several opportunities for members to receive much deserved recognition for the excellent educational programs that they conduct throughout the year. Be sure to read through the rest of this newsletter for details on these opportunities.

I am sure that I am not alone in being impressed at the strong showing the Agriculture and Natural Resources programs had in the recent poster session during our statewide VCE in-service meetings in Charlottesville. We are aware of the high quality programs that our colleagues conduct during the year. I am so pleased that our members recognized the opportunity to showcase these programs to their coworkers in other program areas, and to administrators whom might not otherwise be aware of the high quality programs that we manage. To those of you who submitted a poster to the VCE in-service session, I applaud you for your efforts, and encourage you to take the next step and submit your abstract to NACAA or another national level professional meeting. To those of you who did not submit a poster this year, I hope that you will do so next year. Let's make sure that the ANR program is the best represented program during this annual event!

The Forum with Administration held during our annual meeting at the in-service meeting in January went very well. It was very nice to have a dialogue with Dr. McCann and Jim Riddell about issues that are of mutual importance and interest to members of our association. Please be sure to thank these folks when you see them for their willingness to sit in the "hot seat" for us and share their thoughts on these important issues. I hope that this forum will become an annual event.

Membership in VAAEA is as strong as it has been in several years. We currently have 127 members, which is high enough to qualify us for two Achievement Award Winners and three Distinguished Service Award Winners at the national level. To our seasoned members, I want to thank you for your continued dedication to our association. To our new members, I want to welcome you aboard, and I hope that you will continue to be a member of our association. There are many benefits to being a member of VAAEA and NACAA. If you want to learn more about the benefits and opportunities associated with your membership, feel free to contact one of the officers that you see listed on the left side of this page, or the association director for your district, who is listed on the VAAEA website. Please also keep in mind that VAAEA is your voice for issues and concerns pertaining to your role as an Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent in Virginia.

Finally, I want to personally extend my warmest wishes to you for a safe and successful end to your winter meeting season, and a good start to your spring!

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Plan to Volunteer to Help with the 2006 Virginia Beef Expo

April 13-14, 2006, Rockingham County Fairgrounds

Plans are underway for the 2006 Virginia Beef Expo at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds near Harrisonburg. The Virginia Association of Agricultural Extension Agents will once again cook and serve beef products during the Expo. This is not only our most important fund raiser of the year, but is also a good public relations opportunity between our association and the agricultural industry. The schedule for Expo this year is a bit different than in year's past, due to the Easter holiday. This year, Expo will be held on a Thursday and Friday, the 13th and 14th of April. We will cook and serve ribeye steak and barbecue sandwiches during the day on Thursday and Friday, and will help cook and serve for the Beef Fest Thursday night. We need 15—20 volunteers for morning and afternoon shifts on Thursday and Friday, and about 40 for the dinner Thursday night. The association will contribute \$30 towards your lodging at Expo, so if you share a hotel room with someone else, your lodging costs should be mostly covered. If you can help us out for any part of our efforts at Expo, please contact Steve Hopkins, hobby@vt.edu, 540-672-1361.

Opportunities to Serve on NACAA Committees Available

As a member of VAAEA / NACAA, you are eligible to serve on one of the NACAA committees. These committees serve to conduct the necessary program development and program recognition functions of the association. As a regional Vice-Chair, you would be responsible for helping to select winners in regional and state competitions, as well as shape the professional development opportunities at our national meeting. I encourage you to consider serving on one of these committees. Listed below are the available committee opportunities for members from the Southern Region. All are two year terms. For more information on the duties of these committees, look to the committee section of our association website. If you are interested in being nominated, please contact Keith Dickinson, Keith.Dickinson@vt.edu, 540-727-3435 no later than February 24, 2006.

Professional Improvement Council

Ag Economics & Community Development
Horticulture
Aquaculture / Sea Grant

Extension Development Council

Early Career Development
Teaching & Communications

Program Recognition Council

Professional Excellence
Recognition & Awards

2006 VAAEA Scholarship Silent Auction Successful

A special thank-you goes to all of the VAAEA members who worked hard to ensure that the 2006 Scholarship Silent Auction held during our statewide in-service meeting was a success. Thanks to your efforts, VAAEA was able to raise over \$1,000 towards member scholarship opportunities. Members and others donated items that were worth over \$1100. A very special thanks goes to our silent auction committee, which was headed up by John Howe, Regina Prunty and Cynthia Gregg.

Plan to Attend the 2006 NACAA Annual Meeting & Professional Improvement Conference

July 23-27, 2006, Cincinnati, OH

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2006 national meeting in Cincinnati. This year's meeting is being co-hosted by the states of Ohio and Kentucky. The agents in those states have put together an excellent set of tours and set of pre-tours. The relatively close location of Cincinnati to Virginia should provide for a good opportunity for Virginia agents to attend this meeting. All active members will soon be asked to fill out an online survey to ask about their intentions for attending the national meeting. If you are planning or even considering attending the national meeting, please take a few moments to fill out the survey. Look to your County Agent magazine and other articles for more information on the opportunities available at the national meeting.

Estimated Costs and Sources of Travel Funding for the 2006 AM-PIC

The NACAA national meeting is a great experience, but it is not free. The 2006 AM-PIC will have a comparable expense than the meetings in Buffalo next year. Here is an estimated breakdown:

Member Registration	
<i>(waived for first-timers in their first 5 years of employment):</i>	\$215
Spouse's Program:	\$175
Sons / Daughters Program:	\$135
Hotel (Millennium or Hyatt official hotels*)	\$120-138 / night
Parking	\$5-15 / day

* In order to meet conference contract obligations, there will be a \$250 off-site fee for any member who chooses to stay in a hotel other than the Millennium or Hyatt.

While the above expense breakdown can lead to quite a significant total cost for attending the national meeting, there are several opportunities for financial assistance. VCE administration will contribute \$400 towards your travel expenses to your professional association meetings. This allowance increases if you are presenting a poster or giving a presentation, so consider submitting an abstract (see related article below). If you have never attended an AM-PIC and are within your first five years of extension employment, your registration fee is waived. Several of the national finalists and award winners receive cash awards for their submission, so you should consider submitting an application for recognition for the good work that you do. The Virginia SARE professional development program has a scholarship program to attend sustainable agriculture training sessions. The AM-PIC always has several sustainable agriculture training sessions. Finally, many of your county governments will assist your travel to a professional improvement conference. Check with your Unit Coordinator or local government to see if such an opportunity exists in your locality.

Professional Improvement Tours in Ohio / Northern Kentucky

One of the most popular activities during the AM-PIC is the professional development tour. The agents in Ohio and Kentucky have put together an impressive and diverse array of tour options. There are thirty tours being planned. Areas of interest will include Horticulture (consumer and commercial), Forages, Equine, Beef Cattle, Dairy, Environmental Management, Timber / Natural Resources, Field Crops, Tobacco, Agri-tourism and Value Added Production.

Apply for an Award or Submit an Abstract now for NACAA AM-PIC Poster Session, Search for Excellence and Professional Improvement Presentations

The January 2006 edition of your "The County Agent" magazine contains details on several award opportunities for NACAA members. Award information is also found online at: <http://www.nacaa.com/awards/>. Be sure to get your applications into the appropriate state committee chair by March 15th. Refer to the committee list online at: <http://www.vaaea.org.vt.edu/Committees.htm> to find the chair for committee listed in the awards description.



VAAEA

Virginia Association of Agricultural Extension Agents

VAAEA Calendar:

March:

15: Deadline for VAAEA members to submit award applications to committee chairs

April:

1: Deadline for committee chairs to submit NACAA Professional Improvement & Communications Awards Entries to Regional Vice-Chairs

13-14: Virginia Beef Expo, Rockingham County Fairgrounds, Harrisonburg

May:

24: VESA Annual Meeting, Richmond

July:

23-27: NACAA AM-PIC, Cincinnati, OH

VAAEA Email Listservs

In order to help focus communication on VAAEA business to the association membership, four email listservs have been created. They are:

vaaea-membership@listserv.vt.edu (All current VAAEA Members subscribed)

vaaea-board@listserv.vt.edu (VAAEA Board of Directors)

vaaea-officers@listserv.vt.edu (VAAEA officers)

vaaea-lifemember@listserv.vt.edu (VAAEA Life Members)

All VAAEA members are welcome to use any of these email lists to communicate issues, events, etc. of interest to the VAAEA membership.

Attention Life Members: We Need your Email Address!

To all VAAEA Life Members... if you would like to have your email address added to the life member email list (see above), then please send an email message to Keith Dickinson, Keith.Dickinson@vt.edu, and put "Add me to Life Member List" in the subject line. For postal address changes or updates, please contact Brad Jarvis, Life Member chair, at 540-948-6881.