

**Minutes of the West Feliciana Parish
Overall Advisory Council Meeting
June 26, 2008**

Members present:

Randy Alvarez
Sharron Ayers
Brian Cutrer
Alyse DeLee
James Genius
Melvin Harvey, Jr.
Chrystal Lachney
Jerry Landrum

LSU AgCenter employees present:

Andre' Brock
Brian Chandler
James Devillier
Lauren Kennedy
Pam Myers
Ken Spoto

The meeting was called to order by Pam Myers, FCS Extension agent and Parish Chair. Self introductions by faculty and committee members proceeded with staff members explaining their responsibilities in West Feliciana Parish and committee members pointing out their relationship with AgCenter programs.

Ms. Myers reviewed the purpose of the advisory leadership council and member responsibilities. Committee members represent the parish and as such bring forth program ideas that have relevance to needs of local citizens. The purpose of the committee then is to identify needs and relevant issues for extension programming, bring about collaboration with other groups, and help to promote a better understanding and awareness of the AgCenter in the community.

Minutes of the June 2006 meeting were reviewed, noting accomplishments made as a result of committee recommendations. These included securing local funding to add a position to the staff and hiring Andre' Brock with 50% horticulture and 50% 4-H youth development responsibilities. Another suggestion was to educate the public about protecting trees around home building sites during pre- and post-construction work. Brochures were distributed to realtors detailing LSU AgCenter recommendations for protecting trees and tree roots during home construction and beyond that time.

At this point faculty members outlined their specific programs and activities relative to their assignments. Brian Chandler, area forester, reported that a major focus is the Feliciana Forestry Association for landowners and forest enthusiasts in the Felicianas, which is the biggest local forest landowner association in the state. Brian conducted the area FFA forestry contest and responds regularly to shade tree calls from the parish. Other programs included joint field days with EBR, the Master Tree Farmer estate planning program, and the annual Forestry Forum.

James Devillier, county agent, reported on programs relative to beef cattle and forage production. Major focus has been placed on field days to disseminate recommendations. An area field day for next spring is in the planning stage. Devillier also has responsibility for a statewide forage-based bull performance test that evaluates the growth and other traits of young beef bulls. Agricultural producers in the parish are able to avail themselves of an ag leadership program that enhances their leadership skills and explores the global commodity markets which impacts local ag prices. Dan Klein recently graduated from the 2-year experience and Brian Spillman is currently enrolled in the 2008-10 class.

Andre' Brock reported on recent programs in horticulture including a "Spring Stroll" of local gardens which promoted horticulture and raised funds for a local 4-H scholarship and the Farmer's Market. The joint East/West Feliciana horticulture seminars in early spring will continue to focus on homeowner landscape and garden topics. Andre' worked with specialists and growers involved in the Farmer's market and published a monthly article in *The Democrat*. Brock mentioned plans to collaborate with science and ag teachers in the school system, and to mesh horticulture science with 4-H and other youth activities.

Lauren Kennedy has recently been hired to offer educational programs to parish residents in the areas of family resource management. A very successful "Welcome to the Real World" program was conducted at West Feliciana High School. The interactive program teaches participants how to write checks, buy food, homes, cars, insurance, etc. and will be offered again in the spring to middle and high school students. Other future efforts will include a high school financial planning program, the adult savings and investment for life program (SAIL) and Navigating Your Way to Home Ownership, a program designed to teach the steps necessary to home ownership.

Pam Myers reported on programming in food and nutrition as well as 4-H. Nutrition programs included a series for Council-on-Aging, a series of educational programs at Bains Elementary School related to diabetes awareness and healthy eating and exercise habits, teaching healthy eating habits in cooperation with the Family Service Center and Head Start, and teaching the Smart Portions healthy weight management program. Pam is assisted in these programs by Mary Jarreau, a nutrition educator providing educational programs to groups and individuals that are food stamp eligible.

Ken Spoto reported on the 4-H livestock program which uses animals to develop the 4-H youngster. Enrollment in livestock projects has ranged from 27 to 40 4-H'ers annually over the past 5 years. A feature of the parish livestock show was the 4-H Mini-Farm where 900 youngsters in grades K to 3 had the opportunity to view the livestock and participate in agricultural education activities. 4-H club members are also able to participate in the ryegrass beef grazing project and livestock records contests.

Pam Myers reported that approximately 300 youngsters are enrolled in the parish 4-H program and this has remained constant over the past few years. A good relationship exists with all schools and 4-H is visible in each school. Some of the program efforts during the 2007 & 2008 school year included internet safety lessons at 4-H meetings, sewing and foods workshops, fishing day, and poster contests. There is a very active junior leader club whose members taught the younger club members during Project Fun Day, assisted with parish activities and conducted several community service projects. Junior leaders on the Fashion Board planned and conducted a fashion show which raised funds for a children's hospital. Out-of-parish activities available to 4-H club members included Marsh Maneuvers environmental camp, 4-H University, 4-H Camp, and Challenge Camp.

2008 is a year of celebration for 100 years of 4-H in Louisiana. A ceremony was held at the parish livestock show honoring past 4-H club members and their families. Mrs. Faye Ritchie has printed several posters and booklets showing the families and students involved in 4-H reliving the past 100 years of 4-H in West Feliciana parish. A fall family 4-H event is being planned and will serve as recruiting tool for the parish program.

After the reports from faculty, committee members were asked for their thoughts and input, and the discussion included these comments:

Randy Albarez stated that extension needs to continue to market itself by linking websites with other partners. The Louisiana Recreation and Parks Association can partner with the LSU AgCenter to showcase AgCenter programs of all types. The state conference will be held January 2009 at the Lamar-Dixon Expo in Gonzales and it is possible for the AgCenter to setup a booth promoting all programs during this event.

Jerry Landrum stated that young people are not entering the farming profession and there is more parceling of land for purposes other than farming. Few people are farming and this is a concern to him and others in the community. A discussion of getting young people into production agriculture followed those comments. Devillier stated the many factors---costs of production inputs, high risk venture, low profits, stress (a 24/7 job), fragmentation of land, glamour, educational requirements---prevent many young people from entering the profession.

Comments were made about moving the meeting to the spring months. Since no objections were heard, the next meeting with the group will be held in March 2009.