

Heifer International Membership Learns Leadership Skills

Situation:

Heifer International's mission is to end world hunger and poverty. Their strategy is to use heifers. The program's goal is to provide a heifer to one family who in turn passes along the gift of a heifer to another family. As people begin to share their animals' offspring with others, they also begin to share their knowledge, resources and skills on how to care for the animals. These groups then form local chapters and support one another in their efforts. Each chapter elects officers and board members. Local chapters lacked leadership in their meetings. Emily King, Louisiana Field Coordinator for Heifer International in Louisiana, was concerned that the chapters needed coaching in parliamentary procedure and board training; so when the tri-state meeting was announced in Louisiana, Ms. King sought the assistance of the LSU AgCenter.

Action:

Heifer International hosted a tri-state meeting with Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana in Delhi, Louisiana, on June 9, 2006. Ms. King was part of the planning process and she suggested that Dr. James Barnes discuss effective board membership and Ms. Dora Ann Hatch teach parliamentary procedure. Ms. Hatch provided the membership with a parliamentary procedure guide and a copy of the training powerpoint for their future reference.

Impact:

The two programs were well received; and since the training, both Barnes and Hatch have received questions from the membership wanting to know more. Heifer International members learned how to use parliamentary procedure and how to become effective board members to improve their local chapters. Now that they have a better understanding of Robert's Rules of Order and understand the role of a board member they report they have greater self confidence. That self-confidence was made possible through the education provided by the LSU AgCenter. Gaining self-confidence, hope, and dignity is what Heifer International hopes to spread throughout the world. The membership has requested through Ms. King that Dr. Barnes and Ms. Hatch provide more leadership training for their Heifer International organization.

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Situation:

New business formation has been identified as one of the most important entrepreneurship activities necessary to spur economic growth of economies in the 21st Century, urban and rural alike (Kauffman Foundation, 2006). Given the high rates of unemployment in rural Louisiana, spurring entrepreneurship activities of various types seems to be a viable rural economic development strategy. However, spurring entrepreneurship activities can be accomplished using many different yet complementary strategies for rural economic development. The most obvious is to provide entrepreneurs in rural communities with access to networks, information, resources and institutions to reduce their costs of establishing new businesses. Another strategy could also be to focus improving community entrepreneurship by encouraging better coordination of local resources within a given community to enable the development of infrastructure assets that could be accessed by local entrepreneurs. For example, a chamber of commerce might provide access to internet and other technological infrastructure assets to encourage expansion of downtown businesses into e-markets, such as using eBay to buy supplies or sell products. But there is a fundamental problem when encouraging community entrepreneurship: often community leaders may not agree on how to develop infrastructure assets to improve the coordination of local resources and do not have access to a method that can help form