Increasing Visibility

The Increasing Visibility initiative will be responsible for developing an effective statewide marketing plan for UT Extension to address the strategic plan goal to establish UT Extension as the primary knowledge source for Tennessee residents. Using marketing and communication strategies, the team will plan and launch a comprehensive and ongoing media campaign to call attention to Extension’s programs, services, and impact, while establishing consistent branding for the entire organization. An important part of the team’s responsibility will be developing standardized, user-friendly processes and marketing tool kits for agents and specialists to promote programs, attract new clientele, and inform residents of Extension’s impact.

Dr. Amy Elizer, Madison County Director, will be serving as leader of the Increasing Visibility initiative. Dr. Elizer has an educational and professional background in communications and public relations. “With changes in our society and community, I see the need to find new ways to reach a broadened clientele,” says Elizer. “That clientele may be more Internet savvy and globally connected, but the needs for local, research-based and non-biased information is as important as ever.”

The following team members have been named: Michael Barry, Donna Carter, Gabe Clemons, Kathryn Hall, Carol Reese, Chris Sneed, Jim Stewart, and Alan Windham. The team is planning their first meeting. Progress on this initiative will be shared in the next quarterly report. We are excited to see how this initiative will positively impact Extension’s presence in Tennessee communities.

Healthy Lifestyles

This new initiative will be responsible for creating a wellness program to help employees select their personal health focus, set goals, and build camaraderie. Beth Bell, Dyer County Director, will lead the team to accomplish its goals. Beth has had proven success with numerous health and wellness projects involving thousands of Tennesseans, including a recent eight-week Cohort Wellness Pilot Program in the Western Region for Extension employees. Having recently led the Wellness program in the Western Region, Beth is well prepared to lead this statewide initiative. The initiative team has been named, and they plan to meet in February. The team will review existing wellness programs in both the public and private sector and design a wellness program for UT Extension employees. The team will also be identifying support materials and incentive strategies to promote healthy lifestyles for UT Extension employees. Those serving on the team are: Betty Greer, Janice Hartman, Jeff Lannom, Hilda Lytle, Natalie Owens, Grant Palmer, Janie Pedigo, Charlotte Smith, Kim Smithson, and Jessica Taylor.

The team’s progress will be shared in the next report. We look forward to great things from this new initiative.

A Word from the Director of Strategic Planning

The Administrative teams from UT and TSU and initiative team leaders met recently in Greeneville at the Clyde Austin 4-H Center for a retreat to discuss implementation of the strategic plan. During the retreat, team leaders reported on their teams’ progress and plans were made for the next initiatives to be launched in 2014. We look forward to sharing these next steps with you soon.

Dr. Shirley Hastings
IT Initiative

Team Leader, Brad Greenfield, reported that several subgoals of the initiative team are making great progress. There are currently 2 county surveys underway to determine capacity, security, and structure of networks across the state to develop standards to better offer IT support. Also, a trial with county offices using OIT for IT needs is underway, and participants will be surveyed to see how OIT met their needs. An IT leadership team, which will function like other program area leadership teams, is being proposed, and the team is developing the framework and responsibilities of the team.

Another important component of the initiative is creating IT best practices and workforce competencies. These two challenging goals are going to be further addressed at the team’s upcoming retreat.

“The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destinations.”

John Schar

Gifts, Grants, & Fees

This initiative has been making great progress in the past months. Leader, Rob Holland, reported at the recent retreat that the team has been processing County Director feedback and is creating a working document which will be a guide to enhancing external funding. This document in progress will contain guidelines, procedures, and protocols for managing external funds. The team will continue refining this document, and they have several upcoming meetings planned.

BEST

The BEST initiative is becoming a reality. The first leg of the BEST program, Preparation, is preparing to launch this spring to all Extension educators. Leader, David Mercker, presented one of the completed modules at the recent retreat, which introduces the other modules. The first leg of the program to become a BEST teacher will begin with knowledge of teaching and learning, including topics such as working with different age groups, knowing your audience, presentation development, and marketing. The modules will be accompanied by a downloadable workbook. Look for the BEST program this spring to improve teaching skills to become a more effective Extension educator.

West TN 4-H Center

The new 4-H Center initiative has been successful in recommending the ideal site of Lone Oaks Farm in Hardeman County. The site far surpasses other recommended properties in size and infrastructure. Leader, Tim Smith, shared several points about the center at the recent retreat. He explained, “This will be a world class facility and economically, it’s the most feasible.” Additionally, he explained that the location is not confirmed yet, so the most important action all Extension employees and volunteers can take is to promote and share to get the word out about the center. Though official gifts cannot be solicited until the property is secured, the project has already received over $1 million dollars in pledges and gifts.

Connect with the UT Extension Strategic Plan

There will soon be a new Strategic Plan website to establish a central location for information on the strategic plan for both the public and Extension employees. The new site will feature a Twitter feed, a feedback form, archived reports, and milestones achieved by each team. The site information will be shared when it goes live. For the latest updates, follow the Strategic Plan on Twitter. If you tweet about the Strategic Plan, use the hashtag #advancingTN.

Follow Strategic Plan progress on Twitter:
@utextensionSP