



## **WSU COUNTY EXTENSION ADVISORY COUNCILS . . .** Telling the WSU Extension Story

### **How do you tell others about WSU Extension?**

Explain that WSU Extension is present in all 39 counties, with over 70 sites, providing educational programming in response to local issues and concerns. It connects the resources of Washington's land grant university with the needs of citizens and communities. Talk about current educational programming in your county. Show how it is addressing a variety of interests and needs.

Explain how WSU Extension represents a funding partnership with county, state, and federal governments as well as various agencies, organizations and foundations. Talk about the funding partnerships and the collaborations that are present in your county.

Most importantly, give specific examples of ways that WSU Extension makes a difference to individuals, groups, and communities. Tell your own story in terms of the impact of WSU Extension's educational programming.

### **What are some basic principles related to communicating with policymakers?**

WSU county Extension advisory councils and WSU Extension staff should work together to develop a plan for building strong relationships with county, state and federal legislators. These efforts need to be ongoing—all year, every year. It is especially important to provide information about WSU Extension to candidates and to new public officials. Connect the information about Extension programming with the interests of the policymakers. We need to provide information that will help them address the needs of their constituents.

A few basic reminders:

- Always be honest.
- Always be positive, polite, and appreciative.
- Know your subject.
- Explain the personal or community impact.
- Say THANK YOU!

### **What are some basic communication strategies?**

- Build on existing relationships.
- Look for new opportunities for creating relationships.
- Develop a clear, concise message. Emphasize WHY Extension programming is important.

- It is usually best to contact your own legislator/commissioner. Also, remember it is very important to build relationships with staff members.
- Discover what types of communication methods seem to work best for you policymakers.

**What can your WSU County Extension Advisory Council do? Here are a few ideas...**

- Arrange regular meetings or other events with commissioners.
- Develop a strategy for getting to know new policy-makers.
- Assign specific staff and council members to specific policy-makers.
- Host tours to see examples of Extension programming.
- Plan a bi-annual special event (picnic etc.) with policy-makers.
- Host a meet-the-candidates event.

Information adapted from Michigan State University Extension.