



Risk Management Education for Farm and Ranch Women

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Notes from Ruth: Meet the Board Members of Annie's Project - Education for Farm Women

Dear Educators and Friends,

There are eleven board members on the Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women Board of Directors. Over the next several newsletters you will be introduced to each of them through a series we have named "Meet the Board Members of Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women." The spotlight this month is on Vice President Kelvin Leibold, Farm Management Specialist, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, Iowa Falls, IA in Hardin County.

Kelvin was among the first to offer Annie's Project in Iowa in 2004. To bring the program to Iowa, Kelvin worked alongside Bob Wells, ISU Extension Farm Management Specialist, Mahaska County, Oskaloosa, Iowa and Tim Eggers, Farm Management Specialist in Page County, Clarinda, Iowa. Kelvin's diverse background in education, sales and investments has made him a premier educator for farm women.



Kelvin Leibold talks to women about estate planning at the 10th Anniversary event held in Ames, IA in 2013.

I can best describe Kelvin by saying that he elevates all women in his classes by treating them like any other extension client, but with the ability to adapt to their style of learning. His experience of working with entire farm families gives him insight into the many roles that farm women perform. True to the core of Annie's Project, he encourages discussion in his classroom by interacting with his audience as he instills research-based knowledge. The end results of his Annie's Project programs are groups of farm women with new and improved skills for managing their farm operations.

Kelvin was elected to the position of Board Vice President in 2015.

Sincerely,
Ruth Hambleton, Founder of Annie's Project

Annie's Project Continues Helping Iowa Women

by Lani McKinney

Hope Ave. Hops – Lacy Mason (Odeboldt, Iowa)

Hope Ave. Hops seems a fitting name for the small scale hops farm operation owned and operated by Lacy Mason on Hope Avenue near Odeboldt, Iowa. Lacy and her husband, Justin, currently reside on the family farm they purchased in 2010. It was built by Justin's grandfather in 1965. The hops farm business is approximately one quarter of an acre with 252 hops plants growing tall against a late summer Iowa cornfield back drop. Lacy hopes to



"Network as much as you can. There are so many women out there willing to share their knowledge and so many resources available."

- Gayleen Moeller, 2012 Iowa Annie's Project & 2015 Heartbeat of the Farm: Human Resources Management Participant



expand to a half an acre next year with 500 hops plants. "I love my farm and I take pride in being here," she says.

Already energetic, Lacy Mason becomes even more animated when she talks about the hops plants she's growing in the expanse of lawn across the driveway on the south side of the house. Wearing a t-shirt reading, "Don't worry. Be hoppy," her passion is clear. Turns out she is raising three varieties of hops, all with distinctive smells – Chinook, Cascade, and Nugget. The female flowers of the hop plants are primarily used in beer making for flavoring and aroma in craft beers which have been recently gaining popularity nationwide. In fact, many breweries in Iowa grow their own hops shares Lacy.



The hops farm business idea came to her one winter when she was looking at a seed catalog to decide what she could grow on the little pink trellis in her front yard come springtime. "There in the middle of the page it read, 'Hops. Easy to grow. Grows on a trellis,'" says Lacy with a laugh. She immediately began doing Google searches on how to raise it. Hops, it turns out, is a fairly rare crop, especially to Iowa, so Lacy has found most of her help and markets to be from the neighboring state of Nebraska. This may change, however, with the recent news that Diana Chocran, Iowa State University (ISU) assistant professor in Horticulture and Extension and Outreach fruit specialist, is taking the lead on a hops experiment at the ISU Horticulture Research Station.



Lacy Mason smells a flower from a hops plant. Each hops variety has a different, very distinct smell.

"I grew up in a rural area in Illinois and then moved to Iowa when I was married. I knew I wanted to do my own thing," Lacy says. She also realized she would need help. "I knew I needed Annie's Project to help me start my own business," says Lacy, "Annie's Project gave me access to resources so I felt I could contact someone on my own." Annie's Project gave her answers to her questions about where to start and where to go for help with her business. The class spurred farm succession conversations with her in-laws as well as teaching her the importance of bookkeeping. "Bookkeeping is hard for me," Lacy laughs, "I'd rather be outside talking to my hops and pulling weeds."

Lacy took an Annie's Project course from ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Field Specialist and Iowa Annie's Project Facilitator, Shane Ellis, in Rockwell City, Iowa in January and February of 2014. "During all of the meetings

this group of ladies shared many of their experiences and personal situations which made the material tangible and applicable," says Shane. "We're fortunate to have the support of the USDA Risk Management Agency partnership grants in our state to help our educator team put the programs for women on." Lacy laughs and says, "Shane is a great cook. If nothing else, we just loved the class to eat his food. It was amazing." Jokes aside, she concedes she also loved being able to network with other women in her area and appreciated the education she received from the class. A self-referenced "Iowa transplant" and the wife of a truck driver, Lacy says even though she's lived in Iowa for seven years, she's alone a lot and it's hard being on the farm and not knowing people. Now she enjoys seeing others she met in class when she's out and about or working part time with the local Farm Bureau office.

Primarily, Lacy says she wanted to walk away from her Annie's Project experience with business planning, marketing and people skills. "The first night was so empowering," Lacy says in reference to the Real Colors training, "You learn so much about yourself and how to work with others." She also enjoyed every night of class being different. "I think my favorite nights were when the NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) people came out to talk about cover crops and the FSA (Farm Service Agency) folks gave us information about grants available to farm businesses," says Lacy. Having exposure to resources such as the NRCS, FSA and ISU Extension and Outreach offices continues to be valuable. "I have since contacted the FSA office about insurance for a non-traditional crop," says Lacy.

Not only did Lacy learn things to assist in her new hops business, but she also learned information pertinent to the row crop operation she and her husband are involved with. While Lacy's husband, Justin, is a truck driver, he also helps his father and brother crop farm the fields surrounding their acreage. After taking Annie's Project, Lacy really enjoyed being able to discuss grain marketing and crop insurance with Justin. "I feel a little more confident knowing how the process works," says Lacy. "Annie's Project gave me the tools I



needed to be more involved in the row crop operation.”

Hop harvest was a scheduled event on August 29th. Justin and Lacy invited friends over for harvest in trade for food, drink and socializing. The harvested hops are dried in trays her Dad made her in the oast house (a building designed for drying hops as part of the brewing process) made out of a portable shed on the west side of the house. Fans vent the air appropriately to aid drying. Once the hops are dried, Lacy markets with Midwest Hop Producers LLC based out of Nebraska. They run a hop production facility where her hops crop is processed into pellets and distributed to craft brewers. Lacy was recently approached by someone who purchased a hops harvester and may collaborate with them with harvest in future years. In the meantime, she says, they will continue to enjoy the social aspect of harvesting with friends.



“I feel like Annie’s Project gave me the skills I needed to be able to increase my profits as the years go with the crop I’m growing. It takes a little time to develop and three years to reach full maturity and of course I have input costs,” says Lacy. “It did give me the skills to be able to plan down the road where I’ll be in five years and tools I can use to keep that growing and increase my percentages every year.”

Lacy is a huge proponent of a woman starting her own business. With the help of Annie’s Project, her business is off to a great start. “It’s really fulfilling at the end of the day knowing that I’ve done this and these are my rewards,” she says as she admires her flourishing hops crop.

KG4 Farms – Gayleen Moeller (Decorah, Iowa)

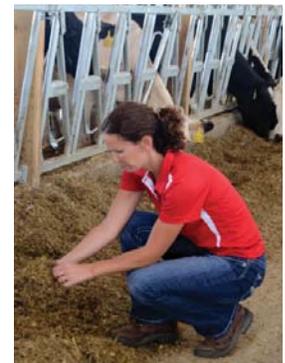


Gayleen Moeller walks through the new cow barn to check on how things are looking.

The Moeller family recently expanded their dairy farm operation by 100 cows. As if 800 cows on their dairy farm wouldn’t keep them busy enough, they also farm 2000 acres of corn, 400 acres of soybeans, 600 acres of alfalfa, and manage hog finishing of 2500 hogs in five barns. It’s no wonder it’s a challenge to keep everything straight. A Luther College graduate who is an accountant by trade, Gayleen, manages to do just that. “I’m in charge of the human resources and do all the paperwork,” says Gayleen. Her husband, Kevin, oversees the cropping program and the general health of the animals. He also makes decisions on expansion of the dairy operation. “He’s the overall manager,” says Gayleen, “I do the accounting and the human resources.”

Gayleen and Kevin have four kids and four grandkids. All four of their kids are grown now. Tye is the oldest (28) and farms with them. Their daughter, Nessa (26), is an Iowa State University (ISU) graduate from the College of Veterinary Medicine and now is a practicing vet for dairy cows in Wisconsin. Tara (23) graduated from ISU in Agricultural Biochemistry and is currently going to graduate school in ISU’s Department of Agronomy specializing in plant breeding. Arley (20) is the youngest and graduated from the Northeast Iowa Community College (NICC) John Deere TECH program, and has decided he wants to farm with the family. With both boys interested in farming alongside them on the family farm, it was important to Gayleen to take Annie’s Project since she knew she’d be dealing with succession planning and moving the family farm business to the next generation.

Originally, Gayleen took Annie’s Project in February and March of 2012 in Calmar, Iowa. Gayleen says taking Annie’s Project helped them “get the conversation started with our children” regarding the future of the farm. They are in the process of updating their wills and held their first family meeting. “That was hard,” says Gayleen. At the meeting she handed out a spreadsheet and had family members write about where they saw themselves in five years.



ISUEO educator Jenn Bentley performs a cow feed check.

More recently, Gayleen took the new Heartbeat of the Farm: Human Resource Management



Jenn Bentley talks with Gayleen Moeller.

class ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Field Specialist and Iowa Annie's Project Facilitator, Jenn Bentley, held in Calmar in March 2015. The new course was developed by a team at ISU Extension and Outreach and was partially supported by a North Central Extension Risk Management Education grant. The project was led by Madeline Schultz, ISUEO Women in Ag Program Manager, and is now a four-session course designed to give women strategies for effectively managing family and employees. "Our farm was getting larger and the safety issues were changing. I wanted resources and awareness of legal issues around that," says Gayleen. Taking the Heartbeat of the Farm: Human Resource Management course translated into action steps for her. In addition to more awareness of the safety issues involved with their operation, she was able to get some things in writing. "I really needed to get operating instructions written up and in Spanish so some of our Latino workers could use them," says Gayleen.

In addition to written protocols to address safety issues on their farm, they put up signs and conducted additional training for employees to ensure they could keep themselves and the animals safe. They also updated their I-9 forms so they would be ready in case they were ever part of an I-9 audit. An Employee Handbook is this winter's project says Gayleen with a smile. Teaching Annie's Project and seeing changes made on farms as a result makes Jenn Bentley feel her efforts to educate are worthwhile. "My favorite thing is getting out on the farm with the producers and getting involved with what they're doing on their operation on a daily basis," says Jenn. Whether changes are made based on a conversation she's had with them or because of connecting them with the latest research to help them make their operation more productive, "I just really enjoy seeing those changes on the producers' farms," says Jenn. "And then that helps the dairy industry overall, as well."

After the Heartbeat of the Farm: Human Resource Management course, Gayleen also conducted job performance reviews with their employees for the first time. "They went really well," says Gayleen, "I think they really appreciated being heard." Gayleen appreciated the tips she learned on how to conduct interviews and write up job descriptions from the class, too. "We don't want to get into legal trouble." Heartbeat of the Farm helped them understand the importance of OSHA and INS compliance. Gayleen knows having operating instructions written out helps ensure all their employees are getting the same level of training and are in a safe, productive environment.

What makes the Moeller farm so successful? "We work really hard," says Gayleen. "The bank sees we're hard working and sees continuity for succession planning. And we care about our animals and the crops." Currently, the Moellers employ eight Latino employees full time and their two sons are also employed full time. It is clear this couple that met in high school through FFA has created a successful, well run business they will be able to hand on to the next generation. Annie's Project played a significant hand in that.



September Annie's Project National Educator Professional Development Conference

The second Annie's Project National Educator Professional Development Conference will be offered on September 22-24, 2015 in Ames, Iowa. Educators from university extension, USDA and other professions across the country who are interested in providing outreach to farm and ranch women are welcome to attend. To see conference details and to register for the conference, please visit <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/womeninag/conference>.

This conference is partially supported by the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education professional development grant program. This conference is also partially supported by the Farm Credit National Contributions program, AgStar Financial Services, and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

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The team welcomes comments on the newsletter and article submissions. You can find past newsletters and other information about Annie's on our website:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/annie/index.html>



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