

The AgLeader



Innovative research, information and education to improve people's lives.

November 2009

Director's Message

By Bobby Soileau, Director

**LSU AgCenter
Agricultural Leadership
Development Program**

Communication is a vital aspect of leadership, and we thought this newsletter would help us communicate many of the activities and issues impacting the Ag Leadership Program. We will have a spring issue and a fall issue every year.



I consider myself fortunate to be the director of this great program. It is a wonderful opportunity to interact with so many leaders affiliated with Louisiana agriculture. In addition, it is a great opportunity to have a positive impact on the men and women who go through our program.

This newsletter will give you updates on the seminars of the current class of Ag Leadership. In addition, we will include alumni updates and accomplishments. Finally, it will give us an opportunity to share some leadership messages.

Speaking of leadership, one of my favorite leadership authors is Warren Bennis. He once interviewed more than 90 leaders to discover what it took to create a culture of change. He identified four competencies that made these leaders unique. They are:

- Vision—the ability to draw other people toward them through a vision for the group or organization.
- Communicating your vision—great leaders not only communicate their vision but they give it meaning to other people. This communication encourages other people to understand and support the vision set forth by the leader.

- Management of trust—this has to do with the reliability and constancy of the leader. Studies have shown people will follow someone they don't agree with if they trust the person.
- Management of self—good leaders understand their strengths and build on them. In addition, they do not believe in the concept of failure. They understand mistakes will happen, but they consider that part of the process. They learn from their mistakes and move forward.

It is a busy time of the year for our program. We just finished selecting our next class, our current class has finished its last lectured-based seminar and we are preparing for our international trip to Brazil.

Our trip to Brazil will be a great experience for our class. The renewed interest in alternative fuels in the United States steered us toward this country which has specialized in this field.

I know from my experience with our previous trips to China and the words of many of our alumni that the international trip was truly an "eye opener" for everyone in our program. Not only do you learn about another culture but you see the state of their agriculture. In addition, you can look at their advantages and disadvantages compared to U.S. agriculture and what we have to do to compete.

In this edition, you will see a story on our recent trip to Santa Barbara County in California. Additionally, you will see the names of our new class, which will begin in January 2010.

Finally, we plan to have a section in future newsletters about recent accomplishments of our alumni and current class members. Please feel free to send any updates or accomplishments to our office throughout the year.

Calendar of Events

Class XII Seminar

Jan. 5-7, 2010
Efferson Hall
Baton Rouge

Class XI International Trip

Brazil
Jan. 24-Feb. 4, 2010

Class XII Seminar

Feb. 9-11, 2010
Efferson Hall
Baton Rouge

Class XI Graduation

Feb. 27, 2010
Faculty Club
Baton Rouge

**Class XII
National Trip**
Washington, D.C.
June 2010

**Ag Leaders of
Louisiana**
Business Meeting
June 2010
During LFBF
Annual Meeting
New Orleans



Ag Leadership class visits California

Briefings on agricultural issues and farm visits highlighted the June 8-12 study tour to Santa Barbara County, California, for the current class in the LSU AgCenter's Agricultural Leadership Development Program.

"Santa Barbara County is a great place to visit because of its diverse agricultural operations and all of the state and local regulatory issues impacting agriculture," said Ag Leadership director Dr. Bobby Soileau.

Soileau said the overall value of agriculture in that county was \$1.1 billion in 2008. Strawberries, broccoli, wine and avocados are the leading crops.

The LSU AgCenter group saw strawberries first-hand at two locations. DB Specialty Farms, which produces 670 acres of strawberries in Santa Maria, is one of the largest operations in the county and sells berries nationwide under the Giant brand. The group toured strawberry fields during harvest.



Darren Gee of DB Specialty Farms talks to class members visiting one of his strawberry fields.

Later, the class went to Teixeira Farms in Santa Maria, which leases a large amount of acreage for strawberry production and has a large state-of-the-art cooling facility for berries. In addition, they grow lettuce, broccoli, celery and other vegetables on 1,200 acres. The class observed celery harvested and packaged in the field.



(Above) Ag Leadership class members discuss issues with Mark Teixeira of Teixeira Farms. (Below) Workers harvesting celery.



The class also toured two wine facilities that represent different aspects of the industry. Terravant Wine Co. is a new, full-service wine industry-support facility that provides custom crush services for farms in the Santa Barbara County area. It also has a wine-analysis laboratory as well as a 40,000-square-foot refrigerated warehouse for storing case goods.

The ag leaders also visited Bridlewood Estate Winery in Santa Ynez, which produces wines from chardonnay, pinot noir and Rhone varieties. During the trip, the group met with avocado and cut-flower growers, too. Although each operation was great to visit, the message from each grower was the impact of state and county regulations that are affecting their ability to stay in business, Soileau said.

"It was certainly the perfect place to see the interface of where agriculture and environmental issues meet," said Hank Jones, a crop consultant from Winnsboro. "Though we may be several years from facing those kind of issues, it is very good

for us to come away having a better idea of how to combat lawsuits that seem frivolous and excessive to our agricultural community."



(Above) Paul Van Leer of Goleta, Calif., talks about his avocado trees. (Below) Frank Costa of Lompoc, Calif., shows off one of his flower fields.



"This trip was an excellent learning experience for our class," Soileau said. "We want them to understand that they have to be more proactive with a number of issues. That is the leadership challenge for many of our class members in the future."

Participants in Class 11 include individuals engaged in farming, ranching, forestry, the nursery industry, wildlife and agribusiness. Members of the class are: Joyce Allen and Bob Allen of Batchelor, Erle West Barham of Rayville, Michael Blazier of Homer, Don Branton of Ferriday, Epney Brasher of Amite, Errol Domingues of Erath, Todd Ellefson of Mandeville, Hunter Fife of Mangham, Stuart Gardner of Sunset, Benny Guerrero of Oak Grove, Hank Jones of Winnsboro, Wilson Judice of Centerville, Amelia Levin of Amite, Chad LeBlanc of Arnaudville, (Class list continued on next page)

(Class list continued)

Jeannine Meeds of Big Branch, Donna Morgan of Pineville, Jenni Peterman of Alexandria, Christian Richard of Kaplan, Scott Shepard of Oak Ridge, Howard Smith of Wisner, Brian Spillman of St. Francisville, John Thevis of Simmesport, Dwayne Viator of Youngsville and Jennifer Young of Zachary.

New class to begin for Ag Leadership in 2010

Twenty-five men and women from across Louisiana will begin a two-year venture in the LSU AgCenter's Agricultural Leadership Development Program when they attend their first seminar Jan. 5-7, 2010 in Baton Rouge.

"I'm excited about the potential of this upcoming class," said Ag Leadership Director Bobby Soileau. "We have a good mix of producers and agribusiness people who are interested in leading the future of Louisiana agriculture."

The members of Class 12 are:

Dennis Aucoin	Clinton
Patrick Babineaux	Amite
Vic Blanchard	Plaquemine
Brad Brown	Rayville
Richard Costello	Oak Grove
Kyle Dill	Shreveport
Marty Graham	Morganza
Noble Guedon	Vidalia
Jason Holmes	Farmerville
Brad Judice	New Iberia
Russell Kent	Clinton
Vadim Kochergin	St. Gabriel
Kevin LaCour	Moreauville
Kyle Lemoine	Moreauville
Karen Leonards	Lettsworth
Brandon McCartney	Shreveport
Barrett McKnight	Ferriday
Neil Melancon	Baton Rouge
Heath Morris	Bueche
Matthew Raley	Winnsboro
Dean Reed	Batchelor
Troy Romero	Welsh
Luke Sayes	Vick
Jess Vanderlick	Alexandria
Matthew Zaunbrecher	Simmesport

Ag Leaders of Louisiana annual meeting a big success

Whenever Ag Leadership alumni get together, it is a great time for fellowship. This year members of every Ag Leadership class were represented at the Ag Leaders of Louisiana (ALL) Annual Meeting in Avoyelles Parish on Oct. 29-30.

Early arrivals participated in two separate tours as both groups had an opportunity to visit the Louisiana 4-H Museum in Mansura. The tours then divided into an agricultural tour and spouse activities.

The agricultural tour began at Blake Newton's farm in Bunkie to see a sugarcane operation. Afterward, they visited the farm of James Deshotel to see a sweet potato packing shed. Ag Leadership alum Mark Fields of Allen Canning ended the tour with a discussion about their canning products.

Avoyelles Parish extension agent Carlos Smith entertained the spouse group with a discussion on landscape plants. Information from Avoyelles Parish Director of Tourism Wilbert Carmouche was followed by a cooking demonstration from Callie Marie Lemoine. Participants returned to Paragon Casino and Resort for spa appointments.

A great crowd attended the evening banquet where everyone had an enjoyable evening. LSU AgCenter Chancellor Bill Richardson spoke to the alumni before AgCenter climatologist Jay Grymes gave the keynote address.

During the banquet, a silent auction took place. Many items ranging from hunting and fishing trips to veterinary services and beautiful plants were available. By the end of the evening, over \$17,000 was raised.

Early the next morning a number of alumni conducted an ALL business meeting followed by a session about the U.S. census and how it will affect Louisiana's congressional representation. Elliott Stonecipher, a political consultant from Shreveport who works with demographics led the discussion. Stonecipher has done numerous sessions for previous Ag Leadership classes.

The AgLeader is an LSU AgCenter publication from the Agricultural Leadership Development Program.

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(ALL Meeting continued)

Overall, it was a very successful meeting, and we look forward to its continued growth. A special thanks to all of these donors to the silent auction.

Dennis Aucoin
Blackhawk Plantation
Mark Bordelon
Hampton Campbell
Croplan Seed Co.
Dupont Crop Protection
Todd Ellefson
Matthew Keppinger
Ryan Kirby
KleenTec Seed Co.
Chad LeBlanc and Ken Naquin
Dr. Henry Moreau
Steve Nix
Paragon Casino
Pioneer Seed
Harold Poole
RiceTec
Larry and Denise Sayes
Syngenta
Terral Seed Co.
Glen Ray Trahan
Scott Williams

Farm Bureau key supporter of Ag Leadership

Despite all its technology, farming's greatest resource is its leadership. Without people to give our industry its face and its voice, farming becomes just another profession.

Since the inception of the LSU AgCenter's Ag Leadership Development Program more than two decades ago, the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation has given its time, money and people to support this important program. James Monroe, assistant to Farm Bureau President

Ronnie Anderson, has served on the class selection committee since the first class. Anderson, currently serving his 21st year as Farm Bureau president, said Ag Leadership is key to the future of Louisiana agriculture.

"The voice of agriculture is shrinking," Anderson said. "There isn't a more critical time when the Ag Leadership Development Program needs our continued support, the support of its alumni and the support of the overall ag community."

Since 1988 the Farm Bureau has provided meeting space, speakers and monetary support to the program.

"Across the country programs like Ag Leadership are struggling," Anderson said. "As the state's top farm organization we're going to continue to do whatever it takes to make our program a success."

"We know about grassroots support and the importance of volunteer involvement," Anderson continued. "When supporters pledge their time, money and resources to Ag Leadership, all of Louisiana, not just the farming and ranching community, wins."

At the Farm Bureau convention in June 2009, the Farm Bureau was recognized by the LSU AgCenter and the ALL program for its years of support. AgCenter Chancellor Dr. Bill Richardson presented Anderson with a plaque of appreciation.

"We wanted Ronnie and the Farm Bureau to know how much they mean to our program," Richardson said. "Without them, and key leaders like them, our program wouldn't be the success it is today."



LSU AgCenter Chancellor Dr. Bill Richardson (left) presents Farm Bureau President Ronnie Anderson with a Leadership Award

Ag Leadership given more support

The Ag Leadership Development Program received numerous donations this year from agribusiness and commodity groups.

"It is important for us to diversify the financial support of our program," said Dr. Bobby Soileau, Ag Leadership director. "It is a testament to the quality of our program that we were able to attract so much new support."

*Agro Distribution LLC
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About the LSU AgCenter

The LSU AgCenter is dedicated to providing innovative research, information and education to improve people's lives. Working in a unique statewide network of parish extension offices, research stations and academic departments, the LSU AgCenter helps Louisiana citizens make the best use of natural resources, protect the environment, enhance agricultural enterprises and develop human and community resources.