

# FOCUS

## ON Leadership



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Building a cadre of grassroots community leaders is a major step in helping Oklahoma's families and communities address the wide variety of social and economic challenges they face. Through partnerships with civic groups, local government, businesses, and other organizations, the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service successfully prepares individuals for major leadership roles in their communities.

The **Oklahoma Family Community Leadership Program (OFCLP)** is a leadership development program that prepares people to identify public issues affecting individuals, families, and the community. The OFCLP fosters citizen involvement in public decision making. The OFCLP and the Oklahoma Association for Family and Community Education jointly sponsor this program with the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service. Since 1987, the OFCLP has been implemented in more than 30 counties and reached more than 110,000 Oklahomans.

The Phillips Petroleum Foundation partnered with the OFCLP to launch a **mini-grants** project in 1995. With this award, the OFCLP funded eight one-year projects throughout Oklahoma. The seed money provided by the mini-grants stimulated emerging leaders to put into practice the leadership skills they have developed by working on issues of importance to their communities.

This issue of *Focus* features leadership development efforts in three major areas: reports on the eight mini-grants projects; results of a long-term OFCLP study, and findings from an evaluation of a one-day regional conference.

– **Lynda Harriman**

Associate Dean/Assistant Director,  
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service



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# The Long-Term Impacts of Leadership Development

A study was conducted in 1996 to assess the long-term impact of the Oklahoma Family Community Leadership Program (OFCLP). The assessment sought to determine the types of community-based leadership activities resulting from the program and the impact of leadership development preparation on these activities. Data to support the study were obtained from a survey of counties reporting OFCLP activity three or more years after formal leadership training.

The qualitative and quantitative findings of this study indicated that the OFCLP has had a long-term impact. Reviewing the

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findings in light of the six elements the study proposed to examine resulted in the following conclusions.

- The types of activities undertaken were a function of community needs. Nineteen distinctly different community-based projects were reported, ranging from family crisis prevention to solid waste management and from fire protection to literacy.
- Preparation is a vital component to successfully implementing activities designed to meet community needs. Formal OFCLP preparation did not appear to be a prerequisite for implementing a community-based leadership activity, as viable activities were reported by respondents who received nonformal OFCLP preparation.
- Content and process elements of the OFCLP were identified as being essential to program success and effectiveness. Respondents consistently identified both educational materials and training as fundamental contributions to the reported OFCLP activities.

- OFCLP has fostered a long-term commitment to leadership development and community activism as implemented through county Extension programming. A majority of respondents indicated a commitment to continue or expand the community-based activities reported.
- Respondents recognized that issues continue to emerge and indicated a need for future OFCLP-related support. When future needs were analyzed, four themes emerged: leadership development, grantsmanship, public policy education, and working with legislators.
- Although the OFCLP made major monetary investments in leadership programming, this study showed a return on investment as exemplified by the multiplier effect. Not only did community-based leadership activities continue among those initially trained through formal OFCLP preparation, but OFCLP activities expanded to include programming in other counties.

*Renee A. Daugherty  
Sue Williams*

## One-day Leadership Conference Format Has Impact

Does your community or organization need leaders but people are reluctant to commit? Many persons could fulfill leadership roles but don't step forward because they lack confidence in their ability to perform effectively as a leader.

Extensive leadership development programs help people gain the skills and confidence to be leaders, though the significant cost and time commitment of many such programs can be a deterrent.

The challenge is to create leadership development opportunities that meet the needs of emerging leaders and are readily accessible to diverse groups, including rural areas. The **Leadership in Your Community Conference** format was developed as a one-day regional leadership education event to meet that challenge. Objectives were:

- To help participants increase their leadership potential

- To empower them to become involved or increase involvement in community leadership activities.

The seven-hour event targeted adults in the early stages of developing their leadership abilities, including those who had not emerged as recognized leaders on a significant scale. It featured three general sessions and concurrent sessions on eight topics. The pilot event attracted 78 adults who voluntarily participated.

A two-part study assessed participant demographics and the impact of the event. Three demographic categories were particularly important to planners of similar future leadership development events:

- **Ethnicity.** While most respondents were White Not of Hispanic Origin (71%), there was a major contingent of Native Americans (25%)
- **Gender.** 74% percent were female.

- **Community size.** 61% were from 5,000 population or less.
- **Reasons for participating in the event** fell into five categories (respondents could give multiple reasons):
  - skill development (84%)
  - leadership responsibility (28%)
  - mental stimulation (16%)
  - recommended by others (14%)
  - community assessment (9%)

About 93% of the respondents indicated that they learned leadership skills that they can apply in their communities, while 46% identified some specific skill or knowledge they had learned.

Pre- and post-tests determined change in skills, attitudes and/or knowledge on 27 items. Results showed improvement in all 27 items, with **14 items resulting in statistically significant improvement.** Most respondents (86%) said concurrent sessions met their expectations.

# Mini-Grants Teach Leadership

In 1995 the Oklahoma Family Community Leadership Program and the Phillips Petroleum Foundation awarded eight mini-grants to provide seed money for community projects. These communities reaped the benefits of leadership skills developed through OFCLP.

**Literacy Team Project (1997-98).** *Garfield County Association for Family and Community Education.* The team made a 25-foot whale for the “Whale of a Tale,, promotion. Inside the whale, volunteers read to and with children at schools, child-care centers, the county fair, and the Family Fun Fair at the Enid Mall. A “Literacy Promotion Display,, and “Raise a Reader,, pamphlets were developed and used at the county fair and Pointers on Pregnancy, an event for expectant families. Almost 400 age-appropriate books were distributed to youth, and age-appropriate children’s books were distributed to 35 families in the ONE program.

*Brenda Gandy  
Extension Educator, Garfield County*

**Bicycle Safety Program (1997-98).** *Latimer County Association for Family and Community Education (FCE), Safe Kids Committee.* A multi-phase bicycle safety program was established for use by area teachers, and wooden street signs were made and put up to encourage safety. The program included a lesson, video, safety course with traffic cones, and helmet giveaways as funds and donations allowed. The program, implemented with third and fourth graders, reach about 200 students in two schools and was also conducted at a health fair.

*Diana Emmert  
Latimer County FCE*



**“Baby-Think-It-Over”™ Program (1997-98).** *Kingfisher County Community Resources Coalition.* Through the mini-grant and other donations, dolls were purchased for every school district in the county. “Baby,, showers yielded batteries, clothes, and car seats. Students changed their opinions about a baby’s effect on a couple’s relationship, responding that a baby can make it harder (change from 40% to 52%). Comments included:

- “I’ve thought about wanting a baby, but the program changed my mind. I had to take it everywhere I went... You don’t get to go out on the weekend by yourself with your friends.,,
- “I know now that I don’t want children yet. I don’t want to have kids until I have more sense.,,

*Laura Gruntmeir  
Extension Educator, Kingfisher County*

**Spring Cleanup Project (1997-98).** *Pontotoc County OSU Cooperative Extension Service.* This project targeted illegal dumps. A fall media blitz and distribution of K-6 school enrichment materials with videos culminated in a countywide cleanup day held in conjunction with the Ada Recycling Coalition. Can recycle containers and trash barrels were purchased and installed at the Pontotoc County Agri-Plex, a site of many large events. “Keep Pontotoc County Clean,, adhesive vinyl signs were created for all containers. 4-H clubs placed two recycling containers in county schools. The Agri-Plex manager established a permanent aluminum can recycling program.

*Janna Edwards  
Extension Educator, Pontotoc County*

**What Works? Reducing Illegal Dumps and Improving Solid Waste Management (1995-96).** *Pittsburg County OSU*

*Cooperative Extension Service.* A traveling display board was made and used at events and the public library, displaying photos of local illegal dumping sites. A poster contest for youth had 210 participants. Articles appeared in the local newspaper and photographs were used at a statewide solid waste workshop. The photos are being used by the Department of Environmental Quality in statewide presentations.

*Ted Evicks and Debra Green-Garrard  
Extension Educators, Pittsburg County*

**Environmental Education (1995-96).** *Okfuskee County Association for Family and Community Education.* Using the Groundwater Flow Model operating display and the *Down the Drain* videotape, this project incorporated a travelling lecture and demonstration to illustrate the hydrological cycle and family household pollution of groundwater. Presentations were given at schools, special events and Parent University reaching 2,667 persons (23% of Okfuskee County’s population!). Most participants expressed a new determination to protect the water table by insisting on better disposal systems for all waste materials.

Future plans include more class presentations and public displays, open houses, and public meetings. Future plans also include cooperating with county commissioners to implement a plan for solid waste disposal, developing a project to help people understand the role plants/trees play in cleaning underground water and air quality, and the establishment of a tree grove in a county park to educate the public on tree selection for the environmental gain.

*Jane Kirkland and Ruth Sharp  
Okfuskee County FCE*

**Health Care Survey (1995-96).** *Laverne, OK, Communities in Economic Transition Health Care Committee.* To help the committee identify the specific concerns of the community, the mini-grant funded a health care survey with two objectives:

- Define what health care services the community feels are not available but should be and/or which ones are available but need to be upgraded or expanded.

- Determine what financial resources the community feels should be spent to help provide the services or would be willing to pay to provide the services.

The project was a joint effort of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Ser-



vice, the Oklahoma Department of Health, local health care providers and the CET Health Care Committee.

*Jane McDowell*

*Laverne CET Health Care Committee*

**Environmental Project (1995-96).** *McIntosh County OSU Cooperative Extension Service.* An educational program and interactive booth were developed with slides of legal and illegal dumping sites, recycling centers, and water and ground pollution. Also, *No Time to Waste Oklahoma* videotapes and the Wet 'n Wild curriculum were purchased. The booth was used at Kid's Resort (reaching 400 students) and the Health and Safety Fair (reaching 1200 students).

*Angela Howard*

*Extension Educator, McIntosh County*

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Lynda Harriman,  
Associate Dean/Assistant Director

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STILLWATER, OK 74078

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