Dear Southwest Region Educators and Staff:  
What beautiful autumn weather we have been having! I hope you have taken time to enjoy it. I am enjoying the driving to county visits with all the color starting to appear.

Thanks so much to Sam Custer, Dennis Reithman, Rhonda Williams, Barb Phares, Barb Hennard, Diane Barga and the entire staff from Mercer and Darke Counties for hosting the State Extension Administrative Cabinet Autumn Retreat September 25 and 26. What an impressive tour and activities were planned to update the Cabinet on agriculture!! Check out the picture on the right of Director of Extension Keith Smith, Aaron Overholser (young grain farmer highly involved in ag technology) and I. Other tour stops included a 700 cow dairy farm, a 1.6 million bird egg operation, and a swine operation.

Important reminders for this week:
Oct. 2 – RFP due for presentations and posters for Annual Conference. There are spaces for 300 posters and as of last week there were only 30 entries. Let’s share the great work being done in the Southwest Region!!
Oct. 3 – Ohio JCEP Award nominations are due. Be sure to take time to nominate your peers who have done outstanding work this past year. Enter your teaching and creative and scholarly works for awards. These are great additions to your dossier! And take time to nominate individuals and groups or businesses for the Friend of Extension Award. It just takes a few minutes to send in a nomination. You and they will be so glad you carried it through!!
Oct. 15 – CED Face to Face meeting, 9 am – 3 pm. Lots of information will be shared. County Directors, don’t miss it! Details coming very soon.

Have another great week!
Sincerely,
Barb
Thoughts to Ponder

Put a Surprise Inside: The Cracker Jack Principle
From The 9 1/2 Principles of Innovative Service
by Chip R. Bell

Service with surprise is like a box of Cracker Jack. It was not the cool box or the caramelized popcorn we craved—it was the free prize inside. While the prize had little economic value, its emotional value was priceless. Surprise breaks the monotony of ho-hum, communicates a caring attitude, and fosters an infectious spirit that customers cannot wait to narrate to others.

Some companies have the principle of including the Cracker Jack surprise down pat.

Zappos is ranked #2 in the U.S. in customer service. It also has “Create Fun and a Little Weirdness” as one of its core values. Zappos sent a bouquet of flowers to a loyal customer after the call center operator learned she had just had an emergency appendectomy. Miller Brothers, Ltd., an upscale men’s clothing store in Atlanta, has “sophisticated fun” as one of its hallmark values. And the proof? A colorful gumball machine sits on a small table in the store’s entrance foyer. Beside it is a large bowl of bright shiny pennies. Guess where Junior goes while daddy is trying on trousers?

What can you do to apply the CRACKER JACK Principle? Pretend the service that you deliver is like your customer’s birthday. The best gifts are those that contain a delightful surprise. Put on your “little kid” creative hat and consider ways to make your service silly, funny, whimsical or quaint. Better yet, ask a kid for ideas! Like Cracker Jack, position the surprise in a way that heightens the astonishment and amazement.

“Being on par in terms of price and quality only gets you into the game. Service wins the game.”
~Tony Alessandra

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Happy September Birthdays…

- September 10 Christy Millhouse-CED/Educator, Preble County
- September 17 Diana May-Program Assistant, Union County
- September 21 Kim Hoppes-Office Associate, Fayette County
- September 25 Carol Wagner-Office Associate, Hardin County
- September 29 Julie Crook-Program Coordinator, Hamilton County
- September 30 Marcia Hatcher-Program Assistant, Champaign County

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Barb Brahm’s Schedule

- September 29 Franklin
- September 30 Warren
- October 1 Fayette/Union
- October 2 Darke/Mercer/Auglaize
- October 3 Hardin

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Southwest Region Forum
Reminders

RIV
Several Educators have asked about the annual reports that are due around January 15 each year. The decision has been confirmed that the RIV reporting system will be used for reports due in January, 2015. Start now to get them in order to avoid the Christmas and New Year rush!!

Hit the Road with the Buckeyes starts today
YP4H invites benefits-eligible faculty/staff and their enrolled spouses/same-sex domestic partners to participate in the fifth annual Hit the Road with the Buckeyes team challenge. The goal is to walk the distance to Ohio State's away football games as a team between now and Sunday (11/16). Qualify for team prizes by hitting one of four achievement levels. YP4H bonus points will also be awarded for individual achievements. Create or join a team of 4-6 people today.
-- > Read more: go.osu.edu/HitTheRoad

Retirement
Lots of changes are taking place in the retirement area. Be sure to check out your status so you don’t miss out on any important dates. If you are retiring soon, be sure to submit your letter of intent promptly. This will enable us to more quickly make plans to fill your position for the good of your county and the Extension organization. Feel free to contact Barb or a member of the HR team if you have questions.

County Highlights...

LaVerne Kidd has emailed the County Directors on September 23 with information about the upcoming deadline for County Highlights. Here are some of the details.

Of all the publications we use with elected officials, County Highlights are the most effective at sharing local impact information. This year, please submit your information to your Region Office no later than Thursday, October 9 (for the Southwest Region, please send your highlights to Carol at bottoms.6@osu.edu). Please keep the overall word count to 1,000 words.

As you did last year, please report your successes under our impact areas. Each county highlight sheet will be organized by these areas:

- Strengthening Families and Communities
- Preparing Youth for Success
- Enhancing Agriculture and the Environment
- Advancing Employment and Income Opportunities

If you have any questions about how to write impact or highlight statements, contact Mauricio Espinoza at espinoza.15@osu.edu or 330.621.6541. (Refer to the email for the attachment for more details on how to write impact.)