



Enterprising Rural Families™

An Online Newsletter April, 2012 Volume VIII,

Issue 4

This newsletter is an instrument of the *Enterprising Rural Families: Making It Work* program of University of Wyoming Extension. For further information concerning the Enterprising Rural Families program or on-line course contact information@eRuralFamilies.org or go to <http://eRuralFamilies.org/>.

TIP OF THE MONTH:

ON LINE MARKETING TIPS

When marketing your product, service or business online, you are entering a new realm of communication that is much more personal than anything you have ever used before.

1. **Don't send SPAM.** Don't email those that don't expect it.
2. **Do ASK PERMISSION** before you send emails.
3. **Don't force OPT OUT**, which means they have to ask to get off your email list.
4. **Do KEEP IT SHORT.**
5. **Don't send ATTACHEMENTS.**
6. **Do SURVEY.** Ask them what they want.
7. **Don't SELL YOUR LIST.**
8. **Do POST A PRIVACY POLICY.**
9. **Don't break TRUST.** Keep your promises.
10. **Do BUILD A RELATIONSHIP.**

You want to engage, not invade; to attract, not intrude.

(Source: *Management Musings*)

Your participation in government (Local, State and National) is IMPORTANT!!!!

by Juliet M Daniels
Southeast Area Community Development Educator
University of Wyoming Extension

Unfortunately, too many of us feel that our voices and our vote don't matter. Not too long ago someone shared with me that they didn't feel that expressing their concerns with a governmental board would make a difference. I beg to disagree! I have seen and experienced firsthand how communicating with public officials can make a difference.



Recently, I attended a meeting of a state board. Like all government appointed boards, this was a public meeting. The board was in the process of discussing changes to rules that would affect thousands of citizens in the state of Wyoming. How many people do you think were in the audience to listen to the board's deliberations and make comments on the proposed rule changes? There wasn't a single person in the audi-

ence who was there to participate in the rule change procedure except for me. In fact, the board received less than half a dozen letters regarding the proposed changes despite the fact that these changes would affect so many people. When it came time for public comment, I shared my concerns about one of the proposed changes and as a result the board discussed ways to address my concerns. This experience reminded me how important it is to communicate with government officials, whether they are elected, appointed or staff.

Every day elected and appointed officials are making decisions that impact our families, our businesses and our communities. These decisions range from air quality to taxes and everything in between. To illustrate how these decisions impact you and me directly, and indirectly, let's imagine their impact on an example family, the Smiths. For our example we will assume the Smiths own a small retail establishment on Main Street in a small rural community. The Smiths have two grown and married children, neither of whom lives in their community.



Example 1: School Capitol Construction Projects:

- Expanding the local school could result in the school hiring new teachers. New teachers could mean more customers. It could also mean a job for one of the Smith's children if they are in the teaching profession and wanted to move back to the community they grew up in.
- Expanding the local school could result in a higher quality educational institution. This could help the recruitment efforts of the local economic development group. More successful economic development efforts results in increased quality job opportunities. If people have better paying jobs, they have more money to spend at the Smiths' store. It could also mean a better education for their grandchildren if their children move back to the community.
- If a local construction company is used for the expansion, the money will stay in the community and the construction company owner and employees will have more disposable income and will be able to buy more from the Smiths store.



Example 2: Oil and Gas Development Regulations:

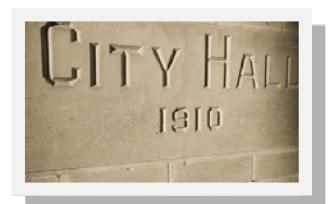
- If the oil/gas companies feel the regulations are too costly they could shut down operations and move someplace else or cease expansion efforts. This could result in fewer jobs in the community and less people to shop at the Smith's store. For those ranchers who were supplementing their ranch income with mineral royalties, this change could decrease their disposable income and potentially cause them to shop less at the Smiths.
- If the regulations aren't stringent enough and the oil/gas company causes environmental damage this could result in the destruction of the outdoor amenities in the area that attract tourists. If fewer tourists visit the area, the Smiths will have fewer customers. The environmental

damage could also make the area a less desirable place to live resulting in less effective economic development recruitment efforts. The environmental damage could also directly affect the Smiths' health and quality of life.

The above two examples illustrate just some of the impacts that could result from decisions made by public bodies and how they could affect us and our families even if we are not directly involved. Unfortunately, these decisions are, more often than not, made with limited community input. Fortunately, governmental entities in the United States have systems and processes to ensure that community input is utilized in governmental decision making. It is up to you and me to ensure our voices are heard on issues that we care about.

If you have never participated in a public meeting, it can seem very intimidating. The procedures can be very formal. This is actually an advantage for you and I. The formality of the meeting ensures that each meeting will follow the same procedure which makes it easier to learn what the proper procedure is for participating.

By law, all meetings of government are open to the public but not all open meetings are open to public input. When you attend a public meeting, the agenda should indicate which portions of the meeting are open to public comment. As an example, the Laramie County Board of Commissioners will specify which agenda items are open for public comment by including the phrase "PUBLIC HEARING."



When the time comes for getting public input, the chair will ask the audience if there is any public comment. This is your cue that it is your time to speak. It is customary to address the chairman and the other members of the board prior to speaking. Again, using the County Commissioners as an example you would say “Chairman and commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to speak about ... My name is ...” Even if the agenda does not specify that an item is a public hearing, you are still allowed to provide comments if the chair asks for public input. If you are not able to attend a meeting in person, be sure and send a letter with your comments.

Most governmental agencies hold their public meetings at the same time and at the same place each month. If you want to affect the way government works, it is important that you contact the agency and find out when and where the meetings are held as well as what is going to be on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Some agencies provide notification of their meetings by email and will add you to their list of people to notify. Unfortunately, this practice isn't as common as it could or should be.

Because your involvement is so important, there are many sources of information designed to help you get more comfortable with participatory democracy. The Wyoming Legislative Services Office provides information on their website (<http://legisweb.state.wy.us/LSOWeb/Participate.aspx>) on how to participate in the legislative process at the state level.



At the national level, our congressional staff are very helpful. In fact, when I was planning a visit to the capitol they provided me with all the information I needed to plan and prepare for meeting with Wyoming's congressional delegation. Contact information for Wyoming's congressional delegation can be found at <http://enzi.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/wyoming-delegation> and additional information about the US Senate and House of Representatives can be found at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.

Citizen involvement can include governmental issues from managing wild horses to land use for mining companies.

Be involved!

Communicate with government officials!



Enterprising Rural Families™

April, 2012 Volume VIII, Issue 4