

# The County Agent



A publication of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents

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## President's Corner - *Steadfast in a Changing World*

It seems that all we hear about these days is the need to change. And since we are often called "change agents", we should be open to change. There are changes in our clientele: who they are, their needs and how they want to hear from us. There are changes in the consumers: their interests or demands and how best to reach them. There are also changes in our workplace: technology, staffing levels and the reporting demands on us. And we could say we have only begun to list the areas of change.

But with all that talk about change, sometimes what seems to get lost is the things that do not change; they may be more important. In fact, I would argue that the basics of Extension work and the heart of Extension work have not, and should not, change. What are they?

Hanging on the wall in my office is a framed copy of "The Code of Ethics" for the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. I do not know the origin or date of this, but its message, in ten commitments, prefaced by "I shall", spells out a high standard for us all. Here are the 10 "I shalls", with a few personal comments after each.

1. "I shall . . . Consider my vocation worthy and as affording me distinct opportunity to serve society." In this you can see the emphasis on service. We have a purpose, and it is larger than us.

2. "I shall . . . Improve myself, increase my efficiency, and enlarge my service." Note the emphasis on professional development for the purpose of serving better.

3. "I shall . . . Remember that I am a professional person and want to succeed, but that I am first an ethical person and wish no success that is not founded on the highest justice and morality." Above all achievement comes ethics and humility.

4. "I shall . . . Respect and hold in high esteem science in all its phases and to recognize that Experiment Station and USDA findings constitute professional authority in agriculture and to respect the opinion of those who have established themselves as authorities in this branch of science." Seek the truth and communicate it.

5. "I shall . . . Be loyal to our State Universities, the USDA, our local, state and national government." And to that I say, "Go green!" in honor of Michigan State University!

6. "I shall . . . Hold in high esteem the callings of both rural and urban activities including farming, urban and youth development programs and homemaking." What I see in this statement is valuing people and their work no matter where they are now, where they are from; no matter who they are, no matter anything. Respect all, serve all.



2023 NACAA  
President  
Phil Durst

7. "I shall . . . Recognize that the development of leadership and the building of communities is the highest service I can render

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## President's Corner...cont. from pg. 1

as a County Extension Agent." We do more than help people, we develop people. We do more than improve businesses, we develop communities. We do more than give people the tools they need, we develop them as leaders who use tools of their choosing to accomplish their goals.

8. "I shall . . . Maintain an open mind, always seeking to understand the viewpoints of others." It reminds me of habit 5 of Steven Covey's "7 Habits of Highly Effective People"; "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." We, of all people, should be open-minded and open-eared – listening to others first.

9. "I shall . . . Not engage in any activity which will interfere with the proper fulfillment of my professional duties and bring discredit to my office." This is a good

reminder that we are in the public eye. We have a higher standard to live up to if we are to be effective.

10. "I shall . . . Support and contribute to strengthening my State or Regional and National association of County Agricultural Agents in their efforts to improve and advance the Extension Service Program for the betterment of our nation." Indeed, as a member of this great association, we need you to be active, be involved and be supportive. And what is at stake is nothing less than the state of our nation! You are an integral part in making our country better.

Let's renew our commitment to this old NACAA Code of Ethics. Let's recommit to serving well, serving with humbleness, serving with purpose and serving with dignity. Let's not change that even as many other things change!

## Going to the AM/PIC (or not), Consider Bringing a Donation to the Scholarship Fund

NACAA offers many professional improvement opportunities to its members. One professional development opportunity NACAA members have is to receive a scholarship from the NACAA Education Foundation. As the adage goes, "You got to be in it to win it." To be eligible for a scholarship, one must contribute at least \$100 to qualify for a \$1,500 scholarship. If one contributes an additional \$100, they are eligible for up to an additional \$1,500.

There are various ways that one can contribute to the Foundation. One way to contribute is to donate an auction item for the NACAA Scholarship Auction. The amount that an auction item brings at the auction is credited to the donor. Not attending the AM/PIC, but someone you know is? See if they can get your auction item to the AM/PIC.

The Scholarship Committee would like to know what you are bringing! Here is the link [https://bit.ly/NACAA\\_Scholarship\\_Donation](https://bit.ly/NACAA_Scholarship_Donation) to complete an only form for auction items. One form needs to be completed for each donated item. Please try to complete the form by **August, 4, 2023**.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with your regional Vice Chair. The regional Vice Chairs are:

North Central, Jennifer Lutes - lutesjl@missouri.edu  
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# NACAA Scholarship Experiences 2022-2023

Within this edition of *The County Agent*, are reprints of Educational Experience Reports which each previous award winner has submitted to the NACAA Scholarship Committee. These reports are from within the last 12 months and are quite impressive in regards to the educational value each individual/group experienced. On average, approximately \$18,000-\$20,000 per year is awarded to NACAA members for scholarship purposes.

If you would like to make a donation to the NACAA Educational Foundation, you can do so via credit card on the NACAA website ([www.nacaa.com](http://www.nacaa.com) - bottom left hand corner - Donate button), or you can send a check made payable to the NACAA Educational Foundation, and mail to NACAA, 6584 W. Duroc Road, Maroa, IL 61756.

Enjoy reading about the exciting opportunities many of our NACAA members had from receiving funding from the NACAA Educational Foundation.

## NCBA Cattlemen's College Educational Experience Report

By: Nick Simmons, University of Florida Extension

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) is a leading organization for beef cattle producers and industry professionals in the United States. The annual NCBA Cattlemen's College is a highly anticipated event for those in the beef cattle industry. The 2023 Cattlemen's College was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, and brought together producers, veterinarians, nutritionists, and other industry professionals from all over the country. This report will provide an overview of the experience of attending the 2023 NCBA Cattlemen's College in New Orleans.

The keynote speakers at the 2023 NCBA Cattlemen's College were a highlight of the event. The speakers included industry leaders, veterinarians, and experts in animal health and nutrition. They provided valuable



insights and information on a range of topics related to beef cattle production, including animal health and welfare, genetics, and feed and nutrition.

One of the keynote speakers was Dr. Dusty Abney, a nutritionist for Cargill Animal Nutrition. His discussion focused on management decisions associated with nutrition that lead to animals being more valuable, heavier, or both. He emphasized return on investment and how it impacts all segments of the beef industry.

### Overview:

The conference took place at the New Orleans Convention Center, located in the heart of downtown New Orleans. The convention center was a fantastic venue, providing ample space for various educational sessions and exhibits. Upon arrival, attendees received a schedule of events for the week, which included a variety of educational



sessions covering topics such as animal health, genetics, and market trends. The conference also featured an exhibit hall where vendors showcased the latest products and technologies in the beef industry.

#### ***Educational Sessions:***

One of the highlights of the conference was the educational sessions. There were over 30 different sessions to choose from, covering a wide range of topics. I attended several sessions on animal health, which provided valuable insights into the latest advancements in veterinary medicine. One session in particular, titled 'Preventing and Treating Common Cattle Diseases,' was especially informative. The presenter discussed the importance of preventative measures such as vaccination and also provided information on how to recognize and treat common illnesses in cattle. This session was particularly relevant to me, as I work with beef producers and am always looking for ways to improve the health of their herds.

Another session that I found particularly valuable was 'Market Trends and Pricing Strategies.' This session provided a comprehensive overview of the current state

of the beef market, as well as insights into developing pricing strategies considering factors such as supply and demand. The presenter also discussed the importance of branding and marketing in the beef industry and provided examples of successful branding campaigns from around the country.

Live cattle demonstrations were also held, where specialists from around the country showcased low-stress cattle handling techniques and efficient use of corrals, pens, and chutes.

#### ***NCBA Trade Show:***

The NCBA Trade Show was another highlight of the conference. It featured over 150 vendors showcasing the latest products and technologies in the beef industry. Some of the vendors included feed and nutrition companies, equipment manufacturers, and genetic testing labs. I was particularly interested in the genetic testing labs, as I am always looking for ways to improve the genetics of my herd. The vendors were knowledgeable and eager to answer any questions I had. The trade show also provided an opportunity to network with other attendees and exchange ideas and information about the beef industry.

#### ***Networking:***

One of the most valuable aspects of the conference was the networking opportunities. I was able to connect with other cattlemen and women from all over the United States, as well as industry experts and vendors. The conference provided a platform for us to exchange ideas and information, and learn from each other's experiences. I found this aspect of the conference to be particularly beneficial, as it allowed me to gain new insights into the industry and build relationships with other professionals.

#### ***Conclusion:***

Attending the 2023 NCBA Cattlemen's College in New Orleans was an incredibly valuable experience. The conference provided a comprehensive overview of the current state of the cattle industry and the challenges and opportunities that we will face in the coming year. I appreciate NACAA for their support and contribution to continuing education for Agriculture Agents. I thoroughly enjoyed my time and look forward to sharing what I have learned with my livestock producers in my county and region. I also plan to attend the 2024 NCBA Convention & Trade Show, which will be held in Tampa, Florida next February.

# Italy Agriculture Market Study Tour Educational Experience Report

By: Mark Nelson, Utah State University Extension - Beaver County

The Italy Agriculture Market Study Tour provided a memorable and educational opportunity for NACAA members to learn about Italy's diverse agricultural industry. The tour began and ended in Rome, offering a good mixture of historical sites in the city and agricultural



experiences throughout Italy.

During the first two days of the tour, we explored some remarkable historical sites in Rome. We visited the famous Trevi Fountain and dedicated an entire day to Vatican City. Our tour included the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo painted his renowned ceiling masterpiece, as well as the



nearly 2000-year-old Basilica church. Additionally, we had a guided tour of the Colosseum, which was constructed before the birth of Christ. It is astonishing to witness the age of these historical sites in Italy.

On the third day, we traveled north to the Tuscany region and visited the town of Orvieto. While Rome was captivating, we were glad to venture outside the city and appreciate the beautiful landscapes and farms. Our guide explained the significance of villages perched atop almost every hill we encountered. At an olive farm that has been in the family for over 200 years, we learned about the entire operation. The farm had a museum showcasing equipment used to process olive oil in the past, as well as modern equipment used today. They bottle the olive oil and sell it in specialty shops and online. We also marveled at olive trees over 600 years old that were still bearing fruit.

The following day, we visited a farm in the morning where they cultivate wheat, barley, and chickpeas. On the farm, they mill the grains into flour and utilize it to produce various types of pasta. We had the opportunity to observe the pasta-making process and witnessed the packaging



for distribution throughout Italy. Everything produced on the farm is organic.

In the afternoon, we embarked on a tour, lunch, and tasting at the Fanti winery. The Fanti family has been producing wine and extra virgin olive oil in the Tuscany region for nearly 200 years. Inside the wine cellar, we encountered bottles of wine that are 200 years old. The winery has remained in the family since the 18th century.

The next day, we transitioned from olives and grapes to cows and pigs. Chianina cattle, raised in Italy for many centuries, are known for their impressive height and docile nature. These cows are fed a fodder made from different grains. The farmer also raises pigs alongside the cattle and processes all the animals at his own butcher shop.

We then traveled to Castellare di Pescia to visit an international Citrus Garden that showcases over 200 varieties of citrus plants from around the world. This breathtaking botanical garden not only features citrus plants from the 15th century but also rare exotic varieties and recent ones originating from the southern hemisphere.

In the afternoon, we proceeded to the town of Pisa and had the opportunity to climb the famous leaning tower of Pisa. Afterwards, we journeyed to Monte Carlo for our farewell dinner at the Fattoria I'L Poggio, an old grape vineyard and winery. They produced a balsamic vinegar that was simply exquisite. Our group purchased all the available stock from their store.

While visiting some of the smaller towns, we were surprised to discover beautiful churches constructed over 500 years ago. These grand structures were built entirely by hand, as electricity was not yet available during that time. We encountered numerous magnificent sculptures and marveled at the accomplishments of those individuals so many years ago.

On our final day in Italy, we traveled to the city of Florence with a local guide who showed us the museums and churches within the city. We also had the chance to explore a vast flea market for some shopping. In the evening, we gathered at the Florence train station and boarded a high-speed train, enjoying breathtaking views as we zipped through the Tuscan countryside. A delightful dinner was served on the train.

This study tour provided me with invaluable knowledge that I have been able to apply in my Extension work. I am immensely grateful for the scholarship that made it possible for me to witness agriculture in another part of the world. It has truly expanded my horizons.

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DIFFERENT JOB WITH EXTENSION?**

**CHECK OUT THE NACAA JOB OPENINGS  
PAGE FOUND AT:**



<https://www.nacaa.com/job-openings>

# Advanced Studies - Educational Experience Report

By: Kimberly Post, University of Georgia Extension - Lanier & Clinch Counties

My Fall 2022 courses included Developing Leadership in Rural Communities (3 credits), which focused on engaging different sectors of the population to create thriving communities, and Dissertation (6 credits). My research proposal for my dissertation centered around Georgia agricultural producers' access to UGA Extension resources. The study aimed to gather data from a cross-section of agricultural producers in all 159 Georgia counties. It relied on the county delivery system and cooperation of ANR agents across the state. The education experience report for the NACAA scholarship will largely be about my dissertation work, as it took up the bulk of my school time and is most transferable to Extension as a whole.

## Study Design

The theoretical framework for this study focused heavily on the work of Rogers (2003) and the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory. In the context of Extension, county agents act as change agents within their agricultural social systems. They are constantly carrying potential adopters through the entire Innovation-Decision Process. If communication channels or access to Extension resources are broken or lacking, potential adopters' Innovation-Decision Process may likewise be halted. This lack of access to Extension resources intersects with DOI Theory and disrupts the stages necessary for successful adoption. Diffusion and adoption can only occur successfully if a potential adopter is aware of the innovation, decides to accept or reject the innovation, tests the innovation, and continues to use the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Since county agents act as change agents that facilitate the awareness, decision making, testing, and continued use associated with DOI, the adoption of any innovations would be majorly restricted if an agricultural producer's access to Extension resources was compromised (Scott et al., 2018).

This study used a descriptive correlational survey design to explain agricultural producers' perceptions regarding the degree to which regional agent systems and fee-based services would limit their access to Extension resources, as well as their previously used and preferred methods of accessing Extension resources. Quantitative data is



*Kimberly Post*

the most common type of data collected from surveys under the post-positivism assertion that variables within a guiding theory can be measured empirically (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). However, this study used a pluralistic approach to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from participants in the same phase of data collection. The target population of the study consisted of all agricultural producers in the state of Georgia. This included hobby farmers all the way to commercial farmers, as the intent was to address the Extension resource needs of people involved in agriculture at all levels.

At the end of the data collection phase, 235 surveys were initiated, with 185 filled out to completion (78.7% response rate). Due to the survey questions being grouped by issue, any respondent who completed Question 8 or further was considered sufficiently partial and remained in the dataset for analysis, as they still provided data points that directly spoke to the research question about methods of access to Extension resources. After the removal of respondents who failed to complete the survey through Question 8, 222 of the 235 surveys remained.

## Results Summary

The sample population was remarkably similar to the target population in terms of race and ethnicity, age, and sex. If anything, slightly more females were represented in the sample, though this remains a sample that can be adequately generalized to all agricultural producers in the state of Georgia. Small- to medium-sized farms, grossing less than \$10,000 up to \$349,999, appear to be the most frequent users of Extension, and they often utilized

Extension resources every few months or monthly. Participants stated they chose to use Extension resources based primarily on the high quality of information and services, local accessibility, and free or low cost. While the majority of responses showed that agricultural producers have previously accessed Extension resources in the form of printed publications and online publications, it was also shown that these are not preferred methods of access. Agricultural producers actually selected both formats of publications as two of the most ineffective methods for accessing Extension sources.

The top preferred access method was verbally with an ag agent on the farm, followed by verbally with an ag agent in the office and a phone call. The top ineffective method was secondhand from another farmer, followed by printed publication and online publication. Only farms that grossed more than \$1 million deviated from this trend and listed text message as one of their top three preferred access methods, as well as listing verbally with an ag agent in the office as one of their top three ineffective access methods.

Regional agent systems would not be tolerated by roughly 75% of agricultural producers. Some respondents commented that they would be forced to use private ag scouts if Extension transitioned to a regional agent system or that they currently use private scouts because they are already more available than ag agents. There was also low tolerance for fee-based troubleshooting services. Farms

grossing over \$1 million were the oddball once again, indicating the greatest tolerance for fee-based services. However, the majority of respondents determined that fees for lab services were acceptable. Although producers were receptive to paying lab fees, the vast majority were unaware that commercial plant disease diagnosis at a UGA lab is available to them for no fee when they bring the sample to their Extension office.

### **Educational Impact**

This course of study and research project have not only better equipped me to serve my growers in educational formats most suited to their needs but also contribute to the overall body of knowledge. The implications of this study can be generalized to the state of Georgia, as well as regions beyond our borders and even nationally. It suggests that what is best for agent promotion and state budgets is not necessarily what is best for our constituents. While this is not really “news,” it provides a recent evaluation of these producer perceptions that can be referenced for county, state, and national-level work within the realm of Extension.

My dissertation defense was held on February 13th, 2023, at Texas Tech University under the advisement of Dr. John Rayfield with committee members Dr. David Lawver and Dr. Rudy Ritz. A full write-up with detailed results is available upon request. Additionally, I intend to draft a version suitable for publication in the Journal of Extension.

## **INTERESTED IN VIEWING ALL AWARD WINNERS (STATE/REGIONAL/NATIONAL) ? GO TO ....**



**<https://www.nacaa.com/award-winners>**

### **Friendly Reminder about AM/PIC Parking**

If you are driving to Des Moines, a few tips on parking availability. The Hilton offers limited parking (probably 100 spots or fewer) at \$25/night or overflows into the 555 5th Ave city parking ramp at \$10/night. The Marriott also has limited parking (about 120 spots or fewer) at \$30 per night but no oversized vehicles, vans, ¾ ton pickups, etc. The Renaissance Savery does not have its own parking

but suggests the city ramp at 400 Grand Ave for \$10/night. The Iowa Agriculture Extension Association has secured “free” parking in two ramps. If you’re staying at the Hilton or Savery, you will use parking garage one, using the entrance at 500 Grand Ave or 501 Locust St. If you are staying at the Marriott, you will use parking garage two, the entrance is at 700 Locust St. These are the only two ramps with free parking. Park your car in one of these two ramps, do not lose the ticket given when entering the ramp. You will pick up your free parking pass at the registration desk in the Iowa Events Center.

# Cattlemen's College and NCBA Trade Show- Educational Experience Report

By: Laura Elmore & Morgan Watts, North Carolina State University Extension



*Laura Elmore*



*Morgan Watts*

Laura Elmore and Morgan Watts attended the National Cattle Industry Convention & NCBA Trade Show in Nashville, Tennessee in 2018, and it was a remarkable experience for them as it was their first time attending such a conference in their Extension career. They have been eager to go back ever since. Finally, in February 2023, they had the opportunity to attend the conference again, thanks to a group scholarship supported by the NACAA. This time, the conference took place in New Orleans, offering a fresh location and experience.

The conference began with The Cattlemen's College, an educational program that sets the tone for the event. Laura and Morgan spent the first day of the conference attending various classes within different topics. They focused on sessions that aligned with their region, the Piedmont of North Carolina, aiming to bring back knowledge that would directly benefit their county citizens. They selected topics such as Reproductive Technologies, Improving Heifer Management, Asian Longhorn Tick Management, and Beef Consumer Marketing. These sessions were relevant to their area, as marketing and reproduction are essential for the majority of cow/calf producers, and the presence of the Asian Longhorn tick in North Carolina required their attention. Fortunately, attendees of The Cattlemen's College received recordings of all the educational sessions, ensuring they could access any sessions they missed in person.

The second full day of the conference allowed Laura and Morgan to explore the trade show and attend educational sessions. Engaging with sponsors and trade show vendors gave them the opportunity to learn about new technologies, establish connections with local industry representatives, and reconnect with previous partners. These interactions had the potential to enhance and strengthen their Extension Education programs in their home counties. As a direct result of attending the conference, they even made a new industry connection that would provide technical assistance and products for a

planned producer training and field day they were hosting in the summer. They also attended committee meetings and industry updates, where they discussed current issues in the cattle industry, such as economic updates, policy decisions, domestic and global markets, and land and water usage discussions. Regional committee meetings allowed them to interact with and learn from producers throughout the southeast, providing valuable insights. One of their learning experiences revolved around the Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) program. As BQA trainers in their home counties, they had the opportunity to hear from program designers about the program's successes and steps to improve it in the future. They also learned from other BQA instructors about implementing training programs with local producers, which they could apply in their own programming efforts.

While the trade show and educational components were exceptional, one of the major benefits of attending the conference was experiencing a new city and its culture. In New Orleans, Laura and Morgan enjoyed a walking tour of the French Quarter, indulged in authentic New Orleans cuisine at local restaurants, listened to fantastic jazz music, and, most importantly, savored several fresh beignets throughout their trip.

Another significant advantage of attending such events goes beyond the educational aspect. Laura and Morgan had the opportunity to network with cattlemen and industry leaders from all over the country, as well as connect with producers and industry professionals from their own state. This networking aspect provided valuable connections and relationships for their work.

They are eagerly looking forward to sharing and discussing everything they learned on this incredible trip with their local cattle producers, covering topics ranging from new technologies to the basics of following best management practices.

# NACAA Agricultural Market Study Tour of Italy: October 1-9, 2022 - Educational Experience Report

By: Kathryn Holmes and Amy-Lynn Albertson, North Carolina State University Extension

The NACAA Italy Agricultural Market Study Tour was a wonderful educational trip with a wide variety of states represented, allowing participants from the west coast (from Oregon) to the east coast (including New Jersey), North Carolina and Kentucky had the largest groups of agents attending.

We began on Sunday, October 2nd, walking with our English-speaking guide through Rome, observing the architecture, fountains, embassies, shops, and small garden areas. For lunch, we enjoyed an authentic pizza tasting with three different types of pizza: four cheese, margherita, and ham, artichoke, and olive pizza. At the Crowne Royal Hotel, we noticed green parakeets nesting in the palm trees. Unique umbrella pine trees dotted the landscape throughout the city, and local vendors sold roasted chestnuts.



On Monday, October 3rd, we toured the Vatican, which was interesting to learn is a separate state within the city of Rome. The Vatican houses amazing sculptures, paintings, and tapestries. The pope's gardens were well manicured and lush green. The Sistine Chapel was crowded, making it challenging to fully appreciate the artwork. After a local food lunch accompanied by accordion and guitar music, we visited the Colosseum and explored more of Rome.



On Tuesday, October 4th, we traveled through beautiful landscapes to Tuscany. Surprisingly, much of the countryside was plowed for planting grain. With many slopes, we wondered about soil erosion problems on the farms. Our first stop was the Bartolomei family olive orchard, where they have been growing olives for 200 years, with some trees being 70 years old. We learned that olives used solely for oil, not for consumption, are harvested by hand. We also toured their olive oil museum, where we saw how olives are pressed and oil is collected. Discussions covered topics such as food safety requirements, value-added products, custom pressing for other farmers, and even fire starters made from olive pits. We enjoyed tasting different types of delicious olive oil on bruschetta cooked over an open flame, along with wine. After the olive orchard, we had lunch at a family restaurant in Orvieto, a small town with beautiful chestnut trees, cobblestone streets, and many shops adorned with planters and window boxes full of heathers.



On Wednesday, October 5th, we continued our journey through Tuscany and made a stop at the green Italian monument, a 500-year-old oak tree called Quercia delle Checche, where we took a group photo. Next, we visited Mulino Val d'Orcia, a grain farm that grows organic ancient grains, mills the flour, and produces pasta. This farm recently received a government grant to upgrade their facilities and is entirely solar powered. The time between milling and making the pasta is less than 24 hours. It was amazing to watch the different pasta shapes being made by changing the grates. They produce three levels of gluten pasta and offer a variety of products. The grower was about to start planting all his fields, which had recently been plowed. The terrain of the fields is rolling and steep in places. The combine used by the grower is narrower than those used in the US, with hydraulics to adjust for the unevenness of the terrain. Due to restrictions on herbicides and chemical use in the EU and Italy, tillage is still a common practice, resulting in prevalent erosion. For lunch, we visited Fattoria Dei Barbi, a vineyard and winery in Montalcino that has been producing wine since 1350. The wine produced here is specific to the area and is called Brunello, a name reserved for wines made from grapes grown in this region. The grapes used are sangiovese, and the soil is rich in calcium, adding to the terroir. We tasted their different wines and then toured the wine cellar. The wine is aged in oak barrels, and the quality improves with the duration of aging in the barrel before being finished in the bottle.



On Thursday, October 6th, we visited Fierli Farm, which raises Chianina cattle and Cinta Senese pigs. Chianina is the oldest breed of cattle in Italy and is considered to produce the finest meats. Chianina is also known as the "gigante bianco" or the white giant because of its size and color. Nicola, the farmer, explained that the cows are not finished at a specific weight or age but rather by appearance. The bull, Ser Osmo, was huge yet gentle. The farm does not use artificial insemination. Nicola also shared information about farm transition, explaining how the farm business has been divided over the generations to include all interested family members. The Cinta Senese pig is native to the Tuscan region. This medium-sized breed has black skin and a white belt. They have been raised for centuries. The pigs are typically free-range on the farm but were temporarily enclosed due to African Hog Disease, spread by wild boars in the area. The grower was in the process of installing a new fence to keep the boars out of the pasture. The main cured meats produced from the Cinta Senese breed are dry-cured ham, capocollo, finocchiona, salami, and pancetta. We visited the Fierli meat shop, where they butcher, cure, and sell their meats. Next, we went to the town of Siena and visited the University of Siena Botanical Garden, originally created for medicinal herbs for the hospital before being taken over by the university in the early 1800s.



On Friday, October 7th, we visited Oscar Tintori's amazing citrus nursery in Pescia. His family has been growing citrus since the 1950s, and there is a 400-year-old espaliered lemon tree on the farmhouse. The family initially sold flowers and later diversified into the ornamental citrus market. The greenhouse serves as a vast display garden where various citrus varieties are grown in the ground for potential buyers to see the plants growing and fruiting. Oscar organically cultivates more than four hundred citrus cultivars. For insect pests, he employs a variety of traps and biological controls. The citrus plants and their fruits and flowers display great diversity in size, shape, color, and time spent on the plant. While their main market is



People stay and work at the vineyard during the harvest season. The vines are planted vertically up the mountain, rather than on the contour, to facilitate drainage and prevent waterlogging of the vine roots. All the vines are cane pruned to a single trunk. The winery produces six different types of wine, including white and red varieties. They also produce balsamic vinegar, grappa, and a sweet wine for dipping biscuits in as dessert.



ornamental, all the fruit is edible and was delicious. They also sell value-added products like citrus marmalades, limoncello, and gazzosa lemonade. As part of their marketing strategy, they offer plants in different-sized containers, with larger ones selling for around \$1500. Additionally, they provide winter storage for customers' plants in their greenhouses for a fee. The plants return healthy, as if they spent the winter in a spa.



Our farewell dinner took place at Fattoria Il Poggio, a vineyard and olive orchard located in the territory of Monte Carlo in the province of Lucca. They have a thriving agritourism and restaurant business as well.

On the final day of the Italy Agriculture Study Tour, we spent time sightseeing in Florence before taking a fast train ride back through the countryside to Rome. We enjoyed the various Italian agriculture visits and particularly appreciated the opportunities to see how farmers are utilizing additional marketing strategies to sustain their farms for generations to come.

# National Garden Club Flower Show Judges School - Educational Experience Report

By: Donna Hoffman, University of Wyoming Extension

I would like to express my gratitude to the Foundation and Scholarship Committee Team Members for providing funding for my travel to and from the Judges School in Chicago, Illinois. During the school, I had the opportunity to work with new potential Flower Show Student Judges, Flower Show School Committee Members, National Garden Club Designer Members, and three National Garden Club (NGC) Flower Show Accredited Judges who served as instructors. The school was hosted by the Illinois State Garden Clubs in the town of South Barrington, a suburb of Chicago, where I stayed in Hoffman Estates. Attendees from Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, and myself from Wyoming were present. As I had been trying to find a Judges School in the Rocky Mountain Region or the West that suited my schedule for several years without success, I decided to attend the one in Chicago since it was easily accessible by air. Additionally, being in the city allowed me to visit the Chicago Botanic Gardens, making it a perfect combination of activities and education for someone with a background in horticulture and floral design.

The main reason I wanted to attend the Judges School was to enhance my knowledge base and skills in judging flower shows based on a standardized approach. I am often asked to judge at County Fairs and have even been invited to judge at our State Fair. By learning the principles of judging based on perfection of exhibit specimens rather than personal preferences, I aimed to improve my judging skills and maintain a high level of integrity. I teach my 4-H Produce Judging members to envision the perfect specimen of a particular fruit or vegetable when they judge, but I had not consistently applied this practice in my own judging efforts in the past. I plan to implement these skills in my future judging endeavors to enhance the quality and fairness of my assessments.

The Judges School also provided valuable insights into the history of Floral Design and various design styles. While I had previously attended Floral Design School and had been exposed to new and innovative design styles during my time as a florist, I lacked a historical foundation to base my designs on. Now, I have a better understanding of the evolution of floral designs, from elaborately filled vases with a wide variety of flowers to the minimalistic line designs of the late 20th century. This knowledge has sharpened my discernment of design styles, ranging from

American Mass Designs to American Line Mass Designs and American Line Designs. It enables me to effectively judge these designs and reach a consensus with other judges when evaluating classes within different divisions of exhibits.



*Donna Hoffman*

Unexpectedly, the Judges School also provided training on writing schedules for National Garden Club Flower Shows. I learned about the required number of classes in each of the five divisions for various types of shows. Once a schedule for a National Garden Club Flower Show is written and approved by state or national organizations, it becomes the basis for judging results. The organization has a comprehensive handbook with 15 chapters outlining the criteria for organizing and judging flower shows, as well as the procedures for each division. One criterion that particularly resonated with me is the prohibition of artificial plant material in NGC Flower Shows. Moreover, horticultural exhibits are expected to consist of plant material grown by the exhibitor for at least 90 days, accounting for regional and growing conditions.

The five divisions of NGC Flower Shows are Horticulture, (Floral) Design, Youth or Sponsoring Organization Exhibits, Educational Exhibits, and Botanical Arts Exhibits. National Garden Clubs encourage collaborations with other organizations, such as youth groups, plant societies, or horticultural enthusiasts, to host flower shows. This approach allows the goals and objectives of different organizations to reach a broader audience. Educational Exhibits, in particular, provide an avenue to communicate messages related to conservation, pest management, species diversification, Integrated Pest Management practices, proper plant health care, and the best practices for growing a variety of plants successfully in the local area. Engaging youth in these activities is vital for passing on gardening skills to future generations and ensuring that today's youth become stewards of the future.

Now that I have completed Level 1 of the Judges School, I am eager to find schools closer to my home that offer Levels 2, 3, and 4, in any order I can find them. Additionally, I look forward to attending Major Flower Shows organized by clubs, regional associations, or state garden clubs. I am confident that these experiences will make me a better judge at fairs in my area, and as I continue to attend future schools, my skills will only improve.

Once again, I express my gratitude for the support provided in enabling my participation in this specialized training.

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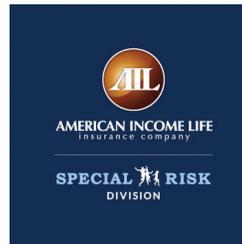
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