

National ACTion



March/April 2003 Volume 24, No. 3

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National ACT

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Visit the National ACT

website at

<http://natact.ifas.ufl.edu>

ACT Convention to be held at Westin Crown Center

By Michelle Nikolai, National ACT Editor

The National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow will hold its national convention in Kansas City, Missouri, with the Agricultural Communicators in Education/National Extension Technology Conference at the Westin Crown Center.

The Westin Crown Center is a AAA Four Diamond Convention hotel that offers 44,000 square feet of meeting space, an audio-visual department, business center, tele-conference service availability, off-premise catering capabilities, and underground parking. The Westin is conveniently located with the Crown Center complex with easy access to shopping, dining and entertainment.

Located within the Crown Center complex, the Westin offers more than 729 guest rooms and 49 luxurious suites. Plus, groups can utilize more than 44,000 square feet of meeting space. Westin hotel guests can choose from two restaurants on site, including Benton's Steak and Chop House and The Brasserie.

The Westin also includes a barber/beauty shop, health club with whirlpool, sauna, exercise facilities, tennis courts and an all-season pool, ex-



press checkout, guest room offices with laser printer/fax/copier, speaker phone with data port, and laundry/valet services.

National Convention is sure to be busy for everyone attending, but ACT members should be sure to take part in breakout sessions and the quiz bowl contest, among other events.

A schedule of events can be found in this issue, but keep in mind sometimes things might change so make sure to pick up your revised copy when you get to convention.

Updated information will be posted on the website and sent to ACT advisors when it is made available.

See you at convention!

Published by the National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow

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Fleishman-Hilliard Named 2003 ACT Honored Professional

By Josh Brown, National ACT Second Vice President

Each year at the ACT National Convention, we acknowledge an outstanding person or group for their continued support to ACT. In Kansas City this June, ACT will honor Fleishman-Hilliard with the 2002-03 Honored Professional Award.

Fleishman-Hilliard is an international public relations company that provides commitment and quality for its clients and employees. They have also been a long-time contributor to ACT. The company has sponsored events and awards, hosted student tours, administered workshops for members and provided internships and jobs to our graduates.

Fleishman-Hilliard was nominated and voted on at the fall board meeting by the national officer team. During our stay in Kansas City, FH invited the officers to tour the office and meet many of its executives and employees. They will also be involved with this year's convention.

ACT to Host Quiz Bowl Contest

By Josh Brown, National ACT Second Vice President

This year ACT will host the first ever Quiz Bowl at the National ACT Convention June 14-17. This event will take the place of previous on-site contests. Teams will have mixed members from different universities and participants can sign-up at convention.

The questions will be general in nature and range from AP style, communication practices and basic agricultural knowledge. I would like to encourage everyone to participate. This is a great way to meet other ACT members from different chapters in a fun and interactive environment.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please feel free to contact me at joshpbrown@hotmail.com.

ACT Plans Softball Game at National Convention

By Jacob Shellabarger, National ACT First Vice President

Sunday night, June 17, ACT members will come together for fun and fellowship in Penn Valley Park, steps from Union Station and the Westin Crown Center in Kansas City. Members will play softball, horseshoes and other games and enjoy food and drink while meeting our sponsors and networking with other ACT members. The event is made possible from a donation from the National Association of Farm Broadcasters.

Softball under the lights at Penn Valley Park overlooking Union Station and some of Kansas City's many fountains is one of the highlights of the evening.

2003 National ACT Convention Schedule

Saturday, June 14

- 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. Welcome reception
Come to the welcome reception wearing your school colors and meet the professional organizations we are meeting with.
- 8:00 – 10:00 p.m. ACT Kick-off event, quiz bowl
You do not want to miss this event! It will be a fun-filled evening of ACT fun and questions. That's right, get your thinking cap on and be ready to buzz in to answer questions.

Sunday, June 15

- 7:30 – 8:00 a.m. ACT Vespers (optional)
We are going to start the day off with a time of reflection and inspiration. The vespers ceremony is optional, but will be great way to start the day off.
- 8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast
- 8:45 – 9:00 a.m. Good Morning, Kansas
- 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. General Session
- 10:00 a.m. - Noon ACT Business meeting
Make sure to attend the annual ACT business meeting. We will have updates on new ACT chapters, chapter reports, the new philanthropy project and an exciting activity.
- Noon – 1:15 p.m. Box Lunch
- 1:30 – 2:15 p.m. Breakout session #3
At this time, you are able to attend one of the informative breakout sessions provided by ACE.
- 2:15 – 2:30 p.m. Break
- 2:30 – 3:15 p.m. Breakout session #4
Once again, you have the chance to attend one of the breakout sessions and network with professionals.
- 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. ACT Workshops
There will be two workshops offered exclusively for ACT members at this time, but don't worry you will have the opportunity to attend both of them.
- 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Etiquette Workshop (conducted by Cheryl Oxley and panel)
Cheryl Oxley, Angus Journal, and a panel of professionals are going to provide the latest tips in etiquette and how to conduct yourself during regular and dinner interviews.
- 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Freelance workshop (conducted by Rebecca Terry)
Ever thought of doing freelance work? Well, this workshop will provide information on how to go about getting freelance jobs and the in's and out's of freelancing.

2003 National ACT Convention Schedule (continued)

6:00 - ? p.m. ACT Off-site event
Bring your ball glove and get ready to play some fun ACT softball. We will be going to a local park to eat hamburgers and hotdogs; and play softball, horseshoes, and other fun games.

Monday, June 16

Breakfast On your own or with ACE?

9:00 a.m. Vendor Fair

9:45 – 11:00 a.m. ACT Officer elections
During this time, we will be electing new ACT officers for the 2003-2004 year. Officer applicants be getting ready for your three-minute speech followed by a question by the presiding officer. Remember, there is one vote per chapter.

11:45 – 2:00 p.m. ACT Career Workshop and lunch at Fleishman Hillard
This afternoon we will go over to FH, have lunch, and hear from FH employees.

2:15 – 3:00 p.m. Breakout session #8
This will be your last chance to attend one of the workshops provided by ACE, you don't want to miss this opportunity.

3:30 – 5:30 p.m. Hallmark Tour
This is one tour you do not want to miss! Get ready to see the leading greeting card industry in the world. Find out how Hallmark works and see the creativity behind the cards.

7:00 p.m. Load buses for dinner

7:30 p.m. Dinner at American Jazz Museum/ Negro Baseball Hall of Fame
This evening we will be dining with ACE and NETC.

Tuesday, June 17

8:00 – 10:00 a.m. ACT Awards Breakfast
Are you anxious to find out how your entries did in the ACT Critique and Contest? After breakfast we will see a slide show of the week in review and hand out all awards.

10:15 a.m. New ACT officer meeting
New officers get ready. At this time, you will be meeting with the new ACT adviser, Shelly Sitton, Oklahoma State, and discuss plans for the upcoming year.

Lunch On your own

Write On!!!

Student research-writing highlights
from the University of Guelph

Guelph, Canada - Combine student can-do enthusiasm with agricultural communications, and you get the Canadian Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow - CanACT. It's the first international chapter of the U.S.-based, National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT), designed to help connect budding professional agricultural communicators with those in the industry.

CanACT was kick-started in late January when a group of about 25 University of Guelph undergraduates became inaugural members. To mark the event, Oklahoma State University student and National ACT President Kendra Kelton journeyed north to Guelph to share her enthusiasm for the initiative and — this being her first trip to Canada - share her insights into the role this chapter could play in the organization.

“ACT and CanACT complement each other by covering the different areas of agriculture as well as the cultural differences between Canada and the US,” said Kendra.

Future events of the Guelph chapter, which is endorsed by the Students' Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College, include discussions with guest speakers about topics ranging from agricultural communications through radio and television, to how to get started as a freelance writer. For more information, check out the CanACT website at <http://www.uoguelph.ca/~canact>.

Reminder

Please bring your cameras to the National ACT Convention. There will be a slide show at the Awards Breakfast and we would like as many photos as possible.

Reminder



(Clockwise from back left) Faculty advisor Owen Roberts, club president Kim Waalderbos, vice-president Jennifer Dick and national president Kendra Kelton celebrate the first official meeting of CanACT. (Photo by Olivia Brown)

Proceed with Caution: ACT Professional Development Event at Kansas State University

By Lucas Shivers, National ACT Secretary/Treasurer

A diverse audience experienced the importance of developing and initiating crisis communications plans at “Proceed with Caution,” an ACT professional development workshop in Manhattan, Kan., Feb. 28-March 1.

Sponsored by the Kansas State University ACT chapter, Amarillo Mesquite Grill, High Plains Journal, A & J Dealership and Kansas Farm Bureau, the event attracted 24 members representing five universities.

Mike Matson, director of communications at Kansas Farm Bureau, welcomed the participants by explaining the background of the Farm Bureau organization.

“When I say Farm Bureau, what do you automatically think of?” he asked. “Insurance, the most common response, is actually only a member benefit to Farm Bureau. It will take a generation to flip advocacy in front of insurance for Farm Bureau’s public image.”

As a turnkey shop, Farm Bureau internally deals with a number of current issues including legal matters, public policy, environmental conservation and membership development.

“Basically, we do anything to advocate for agriculture,” he said. “Everything we do deals with some aspect of communication. (Communication) has now been recognized as a vital part of our work.”

Responding to the grassroots constituents of the organization, a majority of the shifting mindset resulted from a ten-stop public hearing series two years ago. County members helped enact a five-year strategic plan centered on key issues of financial independence, relevance, responsiveness, advocacy and communication.

Draining rural populations, fewer production farmers and concentrated urban centers account for new methods to reach Farm Bureau’s target audience. While two-thirds of Kansas’s counties lost population through the past decade, two counties accounted for 70 percent, or 210,000 new citizens.

“We have to adapt to this reality and make it work,” Matson said. “We are on a constant educational effort to give citizens a recognition of reality.”

Another speaker at the workshop, Jackie McClaskey, K-State College of Agriculture assistant dean, said the agriculture industry often spends a majority of their time talking amongst themselves.

“We seldom think of other’s perspectives,” McClaskey said. “It turns into a battle of right verses wrong, and we, on the side of agriculture, always think we are right.”

She added that education and communication can help deliver agriculture’s message to urban audiences; however, listening must to be a precursor to any confrontation.

“Before we ever attempt to make changes, we need to listen and research to know where people come from,” McClaskey said. “Taking a step back can prevent people from slamming the door before we can even get a foot in it.”



Representatives from Nebraska, Missouri, Wisconsin and Oklahoma, as well as Kansas State ACT member attended the Professional Development Event held Feb. 28 and March 1.

With the additional background, she said controversial issues may lose some the initial black and white attitudes and begin to present shades of gray. She suggested that asking questions, broadening the scopes of magazines and periodical readings, clarifying the issues and evaluating prior decisions can help individuals decide their actions in ethical dilemmas.

“Each decision you make should pass the golden rule test of treating others better than your self, the front page test of being okay with the headlines the next day, and the kid-on-the-shoulder test of teaching others the right ways,” McClaskey said.

(continued on next page)

Kansas State Hosts Professional Development Event (continued)

She concluded her presentation with five questions to personally answer each day: Did I practice any virtues today as I put my ethics into action? Did I do more good than harm today not only from my perspective, but also from others? Did I treat people with dignity and respect today to treat them better than I would like to be treated? Was I fair and just today to all people? Is my community better because I was in it today and am I better for being in my community?

Participants also learned how to develop a crisis communications plan and the importance of having one in place before a crisis situation arises.

“It is not a matter of if, but when,” said Joye Gordon, assistant professor in public relations at K-State. “A crisis is any occurrence or activity disrupting the normal organizational operations and causing strong emotional responses from stakeholders.”

With both physical and reputation hazards, Gordon said the communication objective during a crisis centers on shortening the duration of the crisis and preventing harm to the organizational reputation.

Gordon outlined the normal stages of a crisis development including initial surprise, insufficient information, escalating events, loss of control, increased outside scrutiny, a siege mentality and panic.

Participants walked through a case study involving Taco Bell, Kraft Foods and Starlink corn, in which genetically modified corn, unapproved for human consumption, was detected in human food products. Students discussed the approaches of each company involved in the crisis.

Gordon said the objectives during a crisis include putting people and their safety first, telling it and telling it fast; admitting the unknowns; not minimizing the issue; and not ignoring the internal or local media contacts.

“It is also important to declare an end to the crisis,” she said. “The follow-up means doing the right thing for the victims and reestablishing relationships with the stakeholders.”

In the final workshop, students role-played a crisis communication situation. In the example, a small farm reported a possible case of foot-and-mouth disease and students representing the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Kansas Livestock Association, an animal rights activist group and concerned citizens asked questions at a mock press conference.

Kris Boone, advisor and interim communication department head at K-State, said many skills could be gained from the experience. “It is important to exhibit concern for others and watch natural jumps of attitudes in the audience,” Boone said. “The risks become much greater when an issue hits close to home.”

A combination of trust and competence becomes a priority to establish control and leadership to overcome the immediate crisis situation.

“Watch the messages and images given to audience in forms other than words,” Boone said. “Show an authority to maintain control and pass this on to expert and lay audiences.”



Above: Members of Kansas State ACT listen carefully to the speakers at the Professional Development Event.
Left: A group prepares for the role-playing crisis communication situation.

ACT Outstanding Chapter of the Year

Entry Deadline: April 15, 2003

Selection of the outstanding chapter will be based on the following categories:

- Educational Activities
- Social Activities
- Leadership Activities
- Community Service Activities
- Fundraising Activities
- Membership Recruitment and Retention Activities

Judging will be based upon the quality and appropriateness of the activities conducted by the club.

A chapter may describe **UP TO TWO activities** per category. Activities must have been completed in the last academic school year.

Awards will be given to the outstanding chapter in each category. Chapters may enter one to six of the categories. Chapters must enter at least four of the categories to be considered for Outstanding Chapter of the Year. If a chapter competes for more than four category awards, the chapter's four highest category rankings will be used for selection of the overall award.

Format:

Each chapter must include the Outstanding Chapter of the Year application form. Each **category** should appear on one separate page. Do not submit any additional material (examples: brochures, photographs). The description of the two activities per category must **not** exceed **one** single-space-typed page (at least 11-point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins). In addition, please **DO NOT** write identifying information about your chapter on the pages (i.e., your chapter's name at the top of each page). All references to your chapter or university's name will be deleted from the page when your entry is sent to judges.

Lastly, each activity in each category **must** adhere to this format:

- Title/name of activity:
- Activity's objective (What was its purpose?):
- Description of the activity (What happened?):
- Outcome/results of the activity (How successful was it? Did it satisfy your objective?):
- Percentage of the chapter's ACT members who participated in the activity:

Applications that do not meet these guidelines will not be considered for an award in that category.

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National ACT Officer Applications due April 25

It's that time of year again! National ACT is accepting applications for next year's national officer team.

Each officer candidate must submit a completed application form and a current résumé; faxes, photocopies, or electronic submissions are acceptable. On the form, please remember to indicate the officer position you desire (if not elected to this position, you may run for one additional position). If applying for editor, submit a writing and/or design sample. The National ACT constitution does state that all national officers be in "good standing" academically at their respective universities.

The application form is available online at the National ACT Web site, <http://natact.ifas.ufl.edu>. Applications should be postmarked or e-mailed by April 25; no late applications will be accepted. If you e-mail your application, please be sure the attachments are .pdfs or rich text format (.rtf) word processing documents. All entries will receive a confirmation of receipt by e-mail.

Duties of National ACT Officers

President:

- Presides at all National ACT meetings.
- Appoints and oversees such committees as he/she deems necessary.
- Maintains contact with members and all advisers.
- Maintains contact with professional organizations.
- Coordinates the program for the National ACT conventions.
- Organizes elections.
- Upholds the National ACT constitution.
- Coordinates ACT professional development workshops.

Second vice president:

- Oversees and coordinates the on-site National ACT Contest at the annual convention.
- Arranges for rooms for on-site contests (with help from president).
- Maintains the National ACT internship directory.
- Coordinates committee activities.
- Coordinates ACT alumni relations.
- Coordinates the selection of the National ACT Scholarship recipient.
- Distributes scholarship application via print and Web (with help from executive adviser).
- Coordinates the selection of the National ACT Honored Professional.

First vice president:

- Presides at all meetings in absence of the president.
- Oversees and coordinates the National ACT Critique and Contest (spring and on-site contests).
- Arranges for judges.
- Orders all awards/certificates except ACT Scholarship recipient(s) and Honored Professional. Adviser will cut check and get certificate for scholarship winner(s) and secure plaque for Honored Professional.
- Posts entry information to Web site (with help from executive adviser).

Secretary/treasurer:

- Records all minutes of National ACT meetings.
- Conducts the National ACT membership program and conducts a membership survey.
- Survey conducted at National ACT convention.
- Organizes fund raising.
- Secures financial sponsorship for contest categories.
- Carries on correspondence for National ACT other than matters of policy.

Editor:

- Publishes newsletters periodically throughout the term of office.
- Coordinates the Web newsletter (with help from executive adviser).
- Writes news releases to inform professional agricultural communicators of current National ACT activities.
- Arranges for news desk reporters for conventions (when applicable).
- Shoots photographs at all National ACT conventions and meetings.
- Arranges slide show at convention of convention activities, when applicable.
- The editor can select at his/her discretion, additional staff from his/her university.