



National ACTion

Volume 26, Issue 2

November 2004

No chapter, no problem

If your university doesn't have enough students interested in forming an ACT chapter you can still become an official member of ACT. All you need to do is send in your name, address, phone number, and e-mail to Shelly Sitton along with a check for dues made payable to "National ACT". Dues are \$12 per member (undergraduate and graduate students) and \$14 per associate member (agricultural communications professionals, including advisers).

Critique and Contest update

The Critique and Contest rules and categories have changed this year in response to feedback from last year's contest. The updated rules and entry form will be on the NACT Web site's home page within a week. All entries must be received by March 18, 2005. For more details, including an the updated list of which entries are submitted electronically and which are submitted via snail mail, see the [Critique and Contest page](#).

Putting a new spin on an old story

By Beth Kent and Kim Waalderbos

Handling sticky situations and hard nosed reporting highlighted CanACT's first professional development workshop held earlier this fall.

The workshop was held at the University of Guelph in partnership with the Ontario Agricultural College 's annual Leadership Conference. Guest speaker, Cathy Lennon, Executive Director of the Ontario Sheep Marketing Association, addressed the dos and don'ts for telephone, print, radio, and television interviews. Lennon suggested that the agricultural industry can increase media credibility by being prepared for the interview and having other reliable, trustworthy sources to redirect reporters.

"Reporters are going to find the story," said Lennon. "If you don't do the interview they will find someone who will, regardless of their credibility."

CanACT members and agriculture students learned that journalists can be motivated by deadlines, building a reputation or being the first to break a story. Lennon said media professionals need information to fit their format, short clips and quotes, and their time is always of the essence. She explained how to become an active spokesperson by being honest, accessible, knowledgeable and reliable.

Lennon discussed how to develop three key messages for any organization and stressed the importance of incorporating them into an interview. She gave suggestions on how to buy time by asking if the interview will be live or taped, how long it will be, where it will be, and if the interview will be printed or broadcast. These

techniques can help create time so the interviewee can compose three key messages and plan responses for tough questions.

“You have to determine what story you want written and then answer the questions accordingly” said Lennon “By having your key messages ahead of time it is easier to get your message out.”

During the workshop, participants were able to gain hands-on experience fielding questions and building confident answers. They had the opportunity to critique themselves and their peers which further strengthened the learning experience. Jonathan Zettler, participant, said the workshop was an invaluable opportunity.

“It was great to learn skills that we will actually use in the future,” says Zettler. “We are future agricultural professionals and need to promote our industry both successfully and positively.” [[collapse](#)]

Idea exchange: Kansas State University

In an attempt to change things up a bit and help with students' busy schedules, the Kansas State University ACT chapter rotates between business meetings, mini meetings and social activities. This combination has enabled K-State to organize a picnic for new students, host a speaker from the broadcast industry and let loose at a bowling party. November's activities will include a dining etiquette workshop and a reception to thank faculty and staff.

- Exchange your chapter's activities with others: Submit them to [Katie Chodil](#)

Texas A&M receives Jim Evans grant money

Texas A&M ACT will take advantage of some Jim Evans Fund grant money to host an exchange with the Texas Tech chapter. This is a new and educational event for their chapter. The two chapters will attend the TAMU vs. Texas Tech football game, enjoy a cookout with irradiated foods, and tour the College Station campus. They will use the money to help cover meal expenses and transportation for campus tours.

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