

Trudy Rice – NACDEP

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

It was time to elect a new President. No, I'm not talking about the Electoral College. In this case, I'm referring to a national professional association which was electing new officers. When the voting was done, the new president of this national organization is a woman from rural Kansas. It's today's Kansas Profile.

Trudy Rice is the incoming president of this organization known as the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, or NACDEP. That name is quite a mouthful, but it represents lots of important community development educational programming which is being carried out across the country.

Trudy grew up in western Kansas and graduated from Norton. She went to K-State and got a degree in education. She also met and married Ron Rice and returned with him to the family farm in Douglas County south of Lawrence.

Trudy began her career in Extension as a 4-H agent in Douglas County and then took time off to stay home as she and Ron had children. She also owned and operated her own small business. When the kids were older, she returned to Extension as a Family and Consumer Sciences agent in Douglas County. Son Brad is now back on the farm and daughter Brandie is a faculty member at K-State.

In 1999, Trudy was promoted to county extension director. This role required her to engage with a broader range of citizens, including civic, non-profit, and governmental leaders across the community. "When I became county director, I saw how important community development work really was," Trudy said.

K-State Research and Extension carries out educational work in four areas: Agriculture, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth, and community development. The first three have a longer history within Extension work, but community development is growing.

"Community development is the process of convening community people to identify critical issues and then matching those issues with resources of the university which can address them," Trudy said.

In 2009, she was promoted to become a state community development specialist with responsibilities for the PRIDE program. In 2010, she was selected as the Extension Fellow to work at the National Association of Counties in Washington DC. In 2015, she was selected to be K-State Research and Extension's state program leader for community vitality.

"Lots of exciting things are happening in community vitality," Trudy said. "We now have programming around leadership, entrepreneurship, First Impressions, and the PRIDE program. Our staff has expanded, thanks to partnerships and financial support from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and the Masonic Foundation of Kansas."

Trudy also has responsibility to network with fellow Extension professionals in other states. A few years ago, she participated in a meeting of the national professional association for Extension staff who are working in the community development arena. This is the previously mentioned organization known as NACDEP - the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals.

At her first meeting, the officers asked for volunteers to work on a particular

project. Trudy stepped up and she ended up chairing the initiative. Two things happened: One, it went so well that others recognized her leadership skills, and two, she observed first-hand the value and effectiveness of the organization.

She got more involved in NACDEP. In 2016 when it was time to elect a new president-elect, the winner was Trudy Rice from rural Kansas. Her term as President officially begins in June 2017.

“Our purpose is to promote the profession of community development within Extension programming,” Trudy said. “I want to establish more state chapters and encourage those chapters to provide professional development opportunities to benefit our members.”

Her state and national duties keep her busy, but she continues to live on the family farm in Douglas County. It’s located south of Lawrence on the route to the rural community of Baldwin City, population 3,503 people. Now, that’s rural.

It’s time to pick a new President. No, the Electoral College is not involved. In this case, the members of NACDEP elected a rural Kansas woman to be their national president. We commend Trudy Rice for making a difference with service to her profession, her state, and her nation.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.