Design Your Succession/Ramsey County

The Situation
The 2012 Census of Agriculture shows a consistent thirty-year nationwide trend that the average age of farmers is increasing. The average age for Ag producers in Ramsey County is 59.7. This means a large number of farming operations will be transitioning to a new owner/operator in the near future. Farming/ranching operations occupy a unique situation in the work world in that they are both a business and a way of life. Changing creates unusual problems for the profit line and family interactions. These problems must be addressed for both the business and the family to succeed.

Extension Response
Four years ago, NDSU Extension Ramsey County held one of the first “Design Your Succession Plan” courses. Since that time, many updates and more information, as suggested by Ag producers, have been added to the curriculum. Local Ag producers agreed that the revised course should be offered.

The succession planning program was provided during three nights in Devils Lake with each session being three hours in length in the fall of 2016. Topics included: Starting Your Succession Plan, Determining What You Want, Developing the Next Generation and Your Legacy, Holding Family Meetings and Conversations and Choosing and Working with Professionals. The sessions also allowed farm families to share and discuss thoughts and concerns they had.

Extension Agent, Brenda Langerud coordinated all the sessions and presented three of the modules. Extension agents Lindy Berg, Towner County and Katelyn Hain, Nelson County were each present for one of the sessions and each taught one module. An additional guest speaker, trained in farm estate planning, was featured at the second session.

Impacts
The completed post surveys of the thirteen participants showed:
- 100% strongly agree that succession planning is extremely important
- 100% know the value of developing a vision for the farm/ranch legacy
- 100% know succession planning term

2016 post surveys also showed statistically significant changes in topic areas the course focused on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Goal</th>
<th>On scale of 1-5, ranking BEFORE</th>
<th>On scale of 1-5, ranking AFTER</th>
<th>Change in ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know the information I need to prepare</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to gather the information I’ll need</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>+1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to problem solve if there are conflicts</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>+1.2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

There is a strong relationship between how the participants rated their ability to not only know the information they need to prepare for but also their belief in their ability to gather it and to deal with conflict as the process proceeds.

Feedback
“All farm families (plus all spouses) should attend!”

Public Value Statement
In the next 15 years, billions of dollars of agribusiness and farming assets will be transferred from one generation to the next in North Dakota. The DYSP program provides the information and framework to help families prepare for a successful and satisfying transition.

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