ADOPT A DECISION MAKER

According to the Arizona Board of Regents Policy Manual (section 6-905), “Employees may participate in political activity outside their employment, but shall not allow their interest in a particular party candidate, or political issue, to affect the objectivity of their teaching or the performance of their regular university duties”. As Extension faculty, we are involved in marketing programs, supporting budget requests, and asking Extension clientele and supporters to lobby for resources. One way to create advocates for Extension in the halls of power is called ADOPT A DECISION MAKER.

Based on a program from Jefferson County, Colorado, ADOPT A DECISION MAKER is an innovative program that brings together Extension Advisory Board members and elected officials to create a two-way dialogue about Extension successes and opportunities. Each Advisory Board member follows these four easy steps:

Step 1 “adopts” one or more key decision makers
Step 2 contacts the decision maker to schedule an informal meeting
Step 3 educates the official about the Extension mission and recent accomplishments and asks for feedback
Step 4 invites the decision maker to attend and participate in a key Extension event

Here are some of the impacts of this program:
♦ Decision makers hear about your strengths from respected community members.
♦ Decision makers see first hand the strong public involvement at your events.
♦ Participation in events breeds understanding that can lead to a greater level of support.
♦ By using scheduled Extension events, maximum impact is achieved for minimum effort.

Some keys to making this program successful in your county:
♦ Match Advisory Board members with decision makers with shared interests.
♦ Schedule the informal meeting at a time and location convenient to the decision maker.
♦ Be sure the interaction is a two way dialogue.
♦ Create one attractive promotional literature piece to mail or hand deliver.
♦ Use an event with your largest attendance that does not conflict with legislative session.
♦ Ask the decision maker to take an active role in the event.
♦ Follow up the invitation with personal contact by the assigned Board member.
♦ Obtain media coverage of your event.
♦ Send decision makers any media coverage with a personal note of thanks.
♦ Track your results and target all newly elected officials for “adoption”.

Biographical information on your state representatives for your county is located at: http://www.azleg.state.az.us/MemberRoster.asp

Our most powerful tool for marketing Arizona Cooperative Extension is the high quality of our programs. When we make a concerted effort to invite and involve key decision makers in our programs, we will have legislative support.