Reflections on the Ag Leadership Program

by Larry Jones, former KALP Program Co-Director

I have had the privilege of working with the Philip Morris and Kentucky Agricultural Leadership programs since 1996. I have worked first hand with 109 people in classes V thru VIII. I have also had the opportunity to work with 113 alumni from the four previous classes. I can honestly say that working with this program has been the highlight of my 36 year professional career.

Following a stint in administration at the University of Kentucky, it was a tremendous opportunity when Dean Oran Little thirteen years ago asked me to lead the agricultural leadership program. I was very fortunate to have had Dr. Randall Barnett show me “the ropes” about how you run a world class agricultural leadership program.

The past couple of years as I have considered retirement, I felt that my mission was to follow Randall’s example and share my experiences with the new agricultural leadership program co-directors, Dr. Will Snell and Dr. Steve Isaacs. I leave this program knowing that it’s in excellent hands and I’m confident that under their leadership the program will achieve new heights. I will continue to be involved with the ag leadership program, but certainly on a much more limited basis.

It has been my privilege to get to know you better as leaders in agriculture in the burley-producing states. It is with great pride that I learn of the various leadership positions that you have assumed in your communities and states. I look forward in the coming years to interact with you as our paths may cross.

Thank you Larry and Linda Jones for your dedication to agriculture leadership!

Larry and Randall have built one of the nation’s best agricultural leadership programs, setting the stage for a future that will continue to raise up leaders to tackle the issues facing agriculture and rural communities. It is our passion to continue their legacy. Larry thank you for all you’ve done.

- Steve & Will
ALP Alumni President, Daniel Green, grew up helping his family on their dairy and tobacco farm in Winchester, Kentucky.

Interested in agriculture business, Green decided to pursue an agricultural economics degree at the University of Kentucky. While working on his Master’s, he worked on specialty crop projects. When Will Snell received funding for an extension associate Green went back to his tobacco roots.

“I was working with Dr. Snell doing county meetings when I was approached by the Burley Co-op about working with them,” explained Green. “I started there in 2002 as an economist and then was promoted to comptroller and eventually went on to be the Secretary and Treasurer.”

Green left the Burley Coop in 2007 to accept a position at the University of Tennessee as the Research Coordinator, heading up the new Center for Tobacco Grower Research. In February of 2009 he took on his current role of Chief Operating Officer for Burley Stabilization Corporation.

“Our goal at Burley Stabilization is to provide new marketing opportunities to growers. We are a burley cooperative,” said Green. “We work with our growers to provide a marketing option for uncontracted tobacco and excess pounds.”

Green’s job at Burley Stabilization continues to keep him tied to his roots in burley tobacco, even though he currently doesn’t farm.

Staying involved with agriculture is important to Green. That is why he is dedicated to the KALP Alumni Association, to keep his agriculture network beyond burley circles active.

“The Philip Morris, now Kentucky Ag Leadership Program, was a great learning and networking opportunity for me,” said Green. “As the KALP Alumni President I hope we can grow the organization to continue to provide opportunities to alumni to grow their leadership skills.”

KALP on Facebook by Brennan Gilkison

While housing tobacco the other day, checking the radar on my phone, in the middle of no where, I received an email from my grandmother asking me to be her friend on Facebook. Of course I accepted.

Let me back up a few steps in case some of you might have missed my story. I was in the tobacco barn and got an email from my 90 year old grandmother, while checking the radar. It is a wonderful world with all this technology at our disposal.

At our recent KALP meeting in French Lick the group was questioning how to get alumni involved, how to stay in touch with classmates, and how to keep members informed. One way to do this is utilizing the social networking site Facebook.

Joining Facebook is easy. Just go to www.facebook.com and follow the instructions for creating an account. Once you have an account, search for Kentucky Agriculture Leadership Program and join the group. It doesn’t matter whether we want to be your friend or not, when you join the group you’re in. We will try to keep the group up-to-date on things that are happening with both the alumni group and the current class. You are always welcome to write in your comments too.

Staying in touch nowadays is a breeze, but only if we are willing to put forth the effort. So take time and join KALP on Facebook today!
Thanks to all of you who have assisted us in the nomination process. Currently we have over 90 nominations for Class IX, with more than one-quarter of them being females – an all-time high. We were also successful in obtaining more nominees from western KY and a few from eastern KY – two emphasis areas. In total, we received nominations from 46 different counties, including 16 counties who have never had a participant in the leadership program. We still are accepting nominations, so please continue to forward us worthy candidates.

All nominees received a letter that outlines the application process. All application materials are available online (or hard copy upon request), with a firm October 15th deadline. Our interviews are set for November 16th (west KY location TBD) and November 17th (central KY location TBD).

The selection committee will consist of Bill McCloskey (representing the Governor’s Office of Ag Policy), Dr. Tony Brannon (representing regional universities), Anthony Koch (representing KALP alumni) and Alison Smith (representing a spouse of an alumni and a female alumni).

One interesting development has occurred since our last newsletter. Daniel Green (COO, Burley Stabilization Corporation in Knoxville TN, current alumni President, and graduate from Class VII), inquired if our program would be interested in accepting qualified nominees from Tennessee if his organization (with potential support from others) would pay “full-cost” for up to two Tennessee participants per class. We checked with the Governor’s Office of Ag Policy, our advisory board, and Dean Smith, and all strongly agreed that including out-of-state participants once again would be very beneficial to the program.

Thus, Class IX will (assuming they are acceptable by the selection committee) have 2 members from Tennessee – boosting our total class to 22 members. Look for more details about Class IX members and our seminar schedule in the Winter newsletter.
Since the last newsletter we’ve tried to get a better handle on Alumni giving. If you’ve given to KALP we want you to be listed in our Contributors List. Check the list in this newsletter. If you’ve given and we don’t have you listed, please let us know. We want to acknowledge all gifts.

According to data we have, forty alumni have made contributions. The total amount of alumni giving stands at $45,425. The range of gifts is from $25 to $10,000. The mean is $1,136 and the median is $500. The accompanying table breaks gifts out by class.

We would like to significantly increase the role of alumni giving. If you haven’t made a contribution, please consider KALP in your giving plans. Remember, gifts to KALP are tax deductible and we have a link to online giving on our newly revised webpage. Go to the Sponsorship tab and select “University of Kentucky Online Giving.” The link is below. The drop-down gift designation list still does not have KALP listed (we’re working on it) so you have to select “Other” and enter KALP in the appropriate slot. If you want to mail a gift or pledge, send it to:

UK College of Agriculture
ES Good Barn
1451 University Drive
Lexington, KY 40546-0276

Be sure to indicate KALP in the memo line.

https://giveto.uky.edu/AG_p/ag.htm
Fundraising efforts have continued this summer. Total giving now stands at about $1.525 million. So we’re over halfway toward meeting the Ag Development Board’s $1 million match.

Since our last newsletter, the Soil Conservation Districts of Kentucky have committed $2,000. Embassy Suites hotel has offered an in-kind contribution that will save us several thousand dollars for the next class. And, a proposal submitted to the Farm Credit System Foundation resulted in a $10,000 grant to support leadership development.

Also, Alltech has invited Class IX for a tour of their facilities and has offered registration fee waivers for their annual symposium and their swine and dairy conferences. This waiver applies to Class IX and to all alumni as long as we don’t exceed 20 participants per class cycle.

If you’re interested in these seminars, check out the Events tab at [www.alltech.com](http://www.alltech.com) and please let us know so we can facilitate the registration. These waivers are worth more than $500 each.

Check out the full list of contributors to KALP (it’s on the website and in this newsletter) and help us thank the individuals and organizations who are helping us reach our $2 million goal.
Recent KALP Events by Will Snell, Program Co-Director

Steve and I certainly believe interaction with Kentucky ag leadership program alumni is vital in promoting and strengthening our program. We know that everyone is busy with too much work, and too many meetings to attend. Therefore, our goal is to still have an annual meeting in February, but to try to have more regional events to allow more alumni opportunities to interact, learn from each other, and just have a good time.

Since our last newsletter, the leadership alumni have participated in two events. On July 9th, thanks to Colby Blair (Class VIII) and his wife Heather, over 20 of us took in the Lexington Legends ballgame. The Legends are the Houston Astros minor league team. Between the ballpark food, fellowship, and a little baseball, we all had a great time. Oh, by the way the Legends did win 9-5. One of the highlights of the evening was Hoppy Henton (Class I) prognosticating that the very next pitch would be a home run to put the Legends up for good. And yes, he was right which led him trying to be the Great Swami all night long. (He should have stopped after the home run call.) Thanks again to Colby and Heather.

Our second event of the summer was a “planning” meeting in French Lick Indiana. While our attendance was small, we did have a very productive planning session. One of the major items discussed was how best to communicate/network with alumni. Ideas included adopting various social networking methods (see Brennan’s article), updating our directory, and creating a blog for alumni to react to our new Alumni View column in our newsletter. We also identified some future alumni events such as a “KALP” Day at Keeneland (tailgating and racing) on Friday October 9th, gathering during Grain Day in Owensboro in January 2010, our alumni meeting in February 2010, and a State Fair event.

One other interesting event that we will take part in 2010 will be a visit with the California Ag Leadership Class #40 -- that’s right the California program is up to its 40th class and they are planning a trip to Kentucky in March 2010. They have asked us to help facilitate the tour. We will likely be calling on some of you to assist and definitely plan to have a reception for our alumni to meet and interact with the California class. More details in the Winter newsletter.

Finally, we are still discussing the potential of a domestic or possibly an international alumni trip. We certainly plan to have more discussion on this at our annual meeting in February. If you have ideas or suggestions on this or potentially other events, please send them to us.

And, by the way it was not all work in French Lick where they have an on site bowling alley and a casino. Brennan Gilkison (Class VIII) is quite the bowler and yours truly is a killer on the two-cent slot machine. Thanks to Kent Moore (Class VIII) who assisted with our accommodations.

Don’t Miss the KALP Fall Outing to Keeneland
Join the KALP Alumni for a day at Keeneland on Friday October 9. For more information contact Will Snell at wsnell@uky.edu.
The number one farm policy issue that all American and Kentucky family farms should have at the top of their priority list is health care.

The high cost of health care or the total lack of it for farm families is a key reason we have, what Secretary Vilsack has called, a disappearing middle of the family farm. For many of our family farming operations health care is probably more expensive than fertilizer, feed, chemicals or some combination of those inputs.

The fact that American farm families do not have access to a single payer or an affordable health care system, like our competitors do all over the world, puts us at a disadvantage. The playing field becomes even more uneven when you factor in that there is no affordable level group policy that would allow a family farm operation to offer affordable health care to employees.

Not having health care insurance to offer employees or to offer family members wishing to continue on the family farm is the key reason why family farms are disappearing in the United States. We are allowing and in many cases encouraging our most valuable resources, our children, to leave the family farm in order to find the health care farm families cannot provide.

Farmers cannot cover the rising cost of family health care or consider providing employee health care out of what they receive for their milk, corn, or their beef cattle. Our competitors from New Zealand to Europe to farmers in Canada don’t have to pay for health care costs out of the bottom line of their beef herd. Health care is a right in their society and not only do their families have access to it but their employees do as well.

American farmers are not competing on a level playing field, and the health care issue is the number one reason why. It is time for our agriculture groups to put the health care issue on the table for discussion at every meeting, luncheon, and conference. It is time American farmers, Kentucky farmers, take action on health care.

~ Hampton “Hoppy” Henton
hentonhfi@aol.com

The Alumni View: A Level Playing Field

The Alumni View

Ag leadership development has always been about addressing important issues that affect agriculture, often from multiple perspectives. To encourage continued discourse we’re going to feature guest commentary from alumni in a section called The Alumni View.

The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the KALP directors, advisory board, or University of Kentucky. We hope to soon have a section on the KALP website to allow for reasonable, responsible, and respectful interchange about issues in agriculture and rural communities.

The first Alumni View is presented by Class I graduate Hampton “Hoppy” Henton. Let Hoppy or us know what you think about the Alumni View. We don’t feel that we all have to agree on everything, but we should be willing to listen to each other as we continue to hone our leadership skills, improve our ag economy, and enhance the quality of life in our rural communities.

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