

Talking/Message Points

Here are a few facts and dates about the Extension Service that can be used as talking points during civic club meetings or other presentations.

- The first consumer education network – now known as the Extension Homemakers Council – was formed in Mabelvale in Pulaski County in 1912 to help families stretch their dollars.
- May 8, 2014, marks the 100-year anniversary of President Woodrow Wilson’s signing of the Smith-Lever Act establishing a nationwide network of Cooperative Extension Services connected to land-grant universities such as the University of Arkansas.
- The signing of the Smith-Lever Act into law in 1914 revolutionized American agriculture and stimulated America’s rural communities. President Woodrow Wilson called it “one of the most significant and far-reaching measures for the education of adults ever adopted by the government.”
- In 1914, only 24 counties had county agents, and those few agents introduced extension programs to an estimated 20,000 farm families. By 1939 there was at least one agent in every county, reaching 199,864 farm families
- The years of the New Deal saw the Cooperative Extension Service work side by side with the Rural Electrification Administration to bring electrical power to rural Arkansas.
- During World War II, the youthful members of 4-H produced more than 2.2 million quarts of canned foods, enough for 14,672 soldiers. In addition, Arkansas’ families relied on extension advice to grow Victory Gardens and improve their quality of life during times of rationed essentials.
- The Second World War also saw the extension service in an unusual role: Supervising more than 10,000 German POWs who were put to work in Arkansas fields.
- While many projects have changed with the times, the cornerstone values of 4-H remain the same. Youth are still show livestock and cook but are also learning to build robots, use GPS and network with peers nationally through the National 4-H Conference, Citizenship Washington Focus and the National 4-H Congress.
- Field days, a mainstay of the farm demonstration method, have evolved into new forms such as the Arkansas Rice Expo, but they remain firmly rooted in teaching farmers better ways to grow their crops.

Talking Points (cont.)

- In 2013, the Master Gardener program celebrated its 25th anniversary. Its leaders look forward to building even better leadership programs, maintaining community landscape programs and educating the public about good gardening and lawn habits.
- Extension's LeadAR program was designed to give Arkansas farmers and other community leaders the skills to become effective leaders at the local, state and even national level. Graduates have gone on to serve in elected and other leadership posts across the state. In 2014, it celebrates too – with its 30th anniversary.
- Extension's Master Gardener program started in Arkansas in 1988. In exchange for receiving the best in horticulture training, these Master Gardeners give back volunteer time. In 2004, the more than 83,000 hours volunteered had an economic impact of more than \$1.2 million.
- The Arkansas Flower & Garden Show is in its third decade, started by extension faculty to help homeowners learn more about their landscape and the larger environment. The show has grown since its beginning and attracts more than 10,000 people each year.