

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Extension and Outreach

Success Story

Title

Annie'S Project Follow-Up – Looking Back Over 10 Years

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Relevance

Annie's Project is a demand driven program based on methodology designed by Ruth Hambleton and enhanced by Iowa State University Extension staff. It has increased the understanding and confidence of farm women in Iowa. Challenges have been made to the outcomes promised by the program.

Response

Bob Wells (recently deceased) brought Annie's Project to Iowa in the spring of 2004. In the fall of 2013 a ten year celebration of the program was held in Memorial Union on the campus of Iowa State University. In the interim extension educators across Iowa and other states were trained on the Annie's Project methodology and implemented the program in the communities they serve.

Annie's Project is an 18 hour program held over 6 sessions. It addresses Production, Financial, Market, Human Resource, and Legal Risk through a discussion atmosphere. Facilitators work with local female agricultural professionals to manage discussions with clear learning objectives. A pre evaluation is implemented at the beginning of the session. A post evaluation is implemented at the end of the session. A follow-up evaluation is implemented 6 months or more after the end of the course.

Annie's Project staff began working with the Research Institute for Studies in Education in 2009. By the spring of 2013 with the guidance of RISE a completely new program evaluation protocol had been developed, tested, and implemented. Results of that new protocol were shared with Annie's Project facilitators outside of Iowa at the National Risk Management Educators Conference in Denver, CO in April 2013.

The results being shared in this success story are from an evaluation of Annie's Project participants in programs funded by the North Central Risk Management Education Center. In April 2013, Bob Wells and Tim Eggers were offered \$3,000 to fund a follow-up evaluation of Annie's Project participants. The bulk of the funds were used in for preparation of the survey instrument and postage. Funds were also used by the Research Institute for Studies in Education to cover data entry costs. 1,240 evaluation instruments were mailed and 217 useable instruments were returned. The The National Women in Agriculture Risk Management Educators Conference in Indianapolis, IN in April 2014 featured a poster summarizing the results.

Results(s)

- Condition Changes

Other Results

Annie's Project has shared three things as expected long term impacts. Participants will develop an expanded network of peers and professional service providers. Participants will have increased confidence in decision making. Participants will become better farm managers and business partners.

Participants will develop an expanded network of peers and professional service providers.

47% said they had contacted another Annie's Project participant.

60% said they had contacted a professional regarding agricultural finance issues.

52% said they had contacted a professional regarding agricultural legal issues.

43% said they had contacted a professional regarding agricultural production issues.

35% said they had contacted a professional regarding agricultural marketing issues.

19% said they had contacted a professional regarding agricultural human resource issues.

Participants will have an increased confidence in decision making.

One of the open ended questions was "Please describe the impact Annie's Project participation has had on the operation of your farm/ranch." There were 11 answers to that question identifying increased confidence. Three examples follow.

"I took the course at a time when my husband and I were just beginning to transition into the leadership role on the farm, and have since taken over the operation and then had his parents pass on. It gave me a confidence in making leadership decisions that I might not have had otherwise."

"I better understand the behind the scenes of our farm, and can contribute to discussions and decisions with knowledge and confidence."

"Annie's participation gave me confidence that I could do many things on the farm I had not done before. My husband was a wonderful mentor to me after his health failed. Annie's class gave me the confidence that I could run the farm."

Even more dramatic was the response to "Please describe the impact Annie's Project participation has had on you personally." 28% of the responses to that question mentioned increased confidence. Three examples follow.

"It encouraged me to see I knew more than I thought I did about the operation of the farm. It increased confidence to do more in farm management. I realized a couple of years later that the farm was a passion as a career, not just as a passion as a farm kid. I retired from nursing to work full time with the farm operation. As I had more time to watch the finances I was responsible for, I could troubleshoot, decrease waste and increase profits. My husband appreciates my passion and my being a geek to watch details he does not like to do. I don't like to do what he does in the field, so I appreciate what he does with the other areas he likes and has an expertise for."

"My ineptitude with bookkeeping and business issues has to do with a lack of certainty on my part. My participation in Annie's project is probably the best step I've taken to gain confidence. My husband is the operator of our ranch and I am an assistant. From our purchase to this date I've participated but not been decisive in any productive sense. I need to go back to the same classes with some confidence under my belt."

"Has given greater confidence in decision making. Has motivated me to complete a few things that we set aside. Annie's broadened my thinking of possibilities."

Participants will become better farm managers and business partners.

One measure of “better” is increased profitability. It is unlikely that profitability is the highest priority of participants. However we did ask, “Please describe the impact Annie’s Project participation has had on the profitability of your farm/ranch.” 43% of the responses were in a specific decision area of either financial management, marketing, or legal issues. 23% of the responses were along the lines of financial decisions. Three examples follow.

“Improved profitability via use of ag decision maker, calculating "true" cost of production. and upgraded software package for record keeping.”

“Since I now understand much more about the farm, I can make informed suggestions. It also made a huge impact on creating an estate so that I wouldn’t just be overwhelmed and have no idea about our farm if something was to happen to my husband. What I learned in Annie’s project also pushed me to insist on separating his mother’s estate so we were in a better financial situation and not dependent on or liable for other brothers farm decisions. We are finally our own entity sinking or swimming by ourselves.”

“Helped me understand our financial records more and helped me find the profit after.”

Part of becoming a better business partner is sharing information. 88% of respondents shared materials from Annie’s Project with their spouse or business partner, and 68% shared materials from Annie’s Project with other family members. Part of becoming a better farm manager is engaging in further learning. 76% of respondents have reviewed course materials. 63% of respondents have used on-line resources introduced in the course. 75% of respondents said participating in Annie’s Project improved their ability to interact with agriculture professionals ‘Some’ or ‘A Great Deal’.

Location / Participant(s) Came From

- Multi-State
- State

Partner(s)

- Business and Industry
- County Extension Staff
- Local Government/Agency