"An Evening of Inspiration for Women in Agriculture and Life Sciences"
April 1, 2005--University of Arizona, Park Student Union 2nd Level, 4-8pm

Presented by:
Dr. Billye Foster & Teresa M. Noon
UA Agricultural Education Department

Keynote—“Things I’ve Learned…” by Dr. Brenda Seevers,
Professor of Agricultural and Extension Education, New Mexico State University

Overview:

“An Evening of Inspiration of Women in Agriculture and Life Sciences” was made possible through the James P. & Shirley O’Brien Diversity Endowment. The purpose of this event was to provide an opportunity where participants could creatively evaluate their own professional status and futures while also networking with fellow participants. The goal was to create a relaxed, comfortable, and inclusive environment, while also offering a multi-sensory experience. Participants in the activity included men and women who were: undergraduate and graduate students from the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, faculty and staff from the University of Arizona College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Arizona Secondary Agricultural Education instructors, faculty from the College of Medicine, and employees from the Pima-Maricopa Irrigation Project. There were a total of 25 participants in attendance.

“My Refrigerator Magnet”

The evening began with an icebreaker activity entitled: “My Refrigerator Magnet.” During this activity, participants used various magazines and craft materials at their tables, to create a collage of images that best represented themselves. Participants were challenged to create a short phrase that best described themselves on their blank magnet. Each participant introduced themselves to the entire group by sharing their “refrigerator magnet” phrase and a brief explanation of their collage. One participant’s creation, “Who Moved My Chi?” humorously captured the concept of change while also bringing to light her newfound interest in practicing Tai Chi to find balance and untapped energy in her life.

“Things I’ve Learned…” with Dr. Brenda Seevers

Following the icebreaker activity, Dr. Brenda Seevers presented a keynote address entitled: “Things I’ve Learned…” Her presentation began with a hands-on activity where participants poured seashells of various sizes and sand into small, glass jars. The sand represented the smaller, less important and time-consuming things in life. The seashells represented the larger, more important things in life that often get neglected. The first part of the exercise had participants filling their jars with sand and then “fitting” as
many of the seashells as possible in the jar. As can be expected, many seashells did not fit. The second part of the exercise had participants placing their shells in the jar first and then filling the jar with sand. Naturally, all pieces fit much better. Through this activity, Brenda reminded participants about the importance of making time for the larger, more important things in life, and distributing the smaller less important things around the larger things, rather than being consumed by all the little things and then being forced to try and “fit in” the important things. Her presentation, “Things I've Learned...” was a light-hearted, multi-media presentation that further reminded participants to enjoy life and to essentially not to “sweat the small stuff.”

“I will use the information presented today in everyday life—not getting stressed over the little things”

“I enjoyed exchanging ideas with other women and learning about balance.”

“From today’s presentation, I plan to make a specific daily priority out of doing one activity for myself.”

“Things I’ve Learned” Discussion:
The evening concluded with timed, topic-focused discussion group rotations. Each table had a different discussion topic. Participants rotated randomly around the room to each of the six discussion stations and engaged it conversation with fellow participants. Each participant received a booklet entitled: “Things I’ve Learned” to use for taking notes during their discussions.

Discussion topics included:

- Dreams and Realities: Planning for the Future in a World of Uncertainty
  (Sharing thoughts and experiences on dreams and realities)

- How do YOU spell Relief? Stressors and De-Stressors
  (Sharing stressors and de-stressors)

- Managing Conflict
  (Sharing thoughts and experiences on managing conflict.)

- The Rose Among Thorns: Being a Woman in a Man’s World
  (Thoughts and experiences on being woman in a man’s world.)

- Balancing Work and Family
  (Thoughts and experiences on balancing it all.)

- When “I” is OK: Taking care of YOU...Emotionally, Physically and Mentally
  (Thoughts and experiences on taking care of you and the challenges associated with putting ourselves first.)

“The discussion conversations were thought provoking.”

“I enjoyed the “Things I’ve Learned” discussion topics following the presentation.”

“Meeting inspiring people made my attendance worthwhile. I have gotten ideas for mentoring programs in my college.”

“This event made me aware of certain aspects of my life I should focus on such as taking care of myself.”

Submitted by: Teresa M. Noon & Dr. Billye Foster--University of Arizona Department of Agricultural Education
Overall Ratings:

1. Timeliness of the Presentation  Overall Score: 3.50/5.00
2. Usefulness of the Materials Presented  Overall Score: 4.00/5.00
3. Value of the Information Presented  Overall Score: 4.50/5.00
4. Appropriateness of the Presentation  Overall Score: 4.25/5.00
5. Knowledge and Expertise of the Presenter  Overall Score: 5.00/5.00
6. Effectiveness of the Presentation  Overall Score: 4.50/5.00
7. Involvement of Participants in Presentation  Overall Score: 4.75/5.00
8. Value of Your Time Spent in this Presentation  Overall Score: 4.75/5.00

Overall Rating—4.40/5.00

Recommendations/Future Plans:
From this event, the goal is to initiate a mentoring system among students, faculty, staff, and practitioners out in the field in various areas of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Our participant feedback helped us to learn that attendance could have been higher, had we advertised the event earlier. Additionally, participants felt that hosting the event on an evening other than a Friday evening would have been preferred. Participants agreed that they would like future opportunities to network with colleagues as well as future presentations on conflict resolution, time management and women’s health.

*Note: All ratings and quotes were obtained from feedback received from the evaluation forms distributed at the conclusion of the event. Number of evaluations received 11 out of 25.