



ANNIE'S PROJECT

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

ANNUAL REPORT | 2015



FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

The excitement about what occurred in 2015 is apparent. Annie's Project—Education for Farm Women has completed its transition to a 501(c)(3). The maturing of the organization has resonated with so many farm and ranch women across the United States. Along with the transformation comes responsibilities. I feel a great responsibility to accommodate all **expectations**.

Let me begin with the **farm and ranch women** who attend our educational programs. They have expectations for a valuable and useful learning experience that will enhance their ability to manage and enjoy their farm and ranch assets. When these women, from all corners of agriculture, young, old, experienced, unexperienced, walk into a room of women with the same frame of mind something remarkable happens. These women open up to learning, and sharing their experiences. When they report to me that family members are meeting them at the home door and want to know what they learned in class today, I see their confidence grow.

To make their program possible APEFW trains the **facilitators** who physically conduct Annie's Project programs. Training a person to host a dynamic educational environment for farm and ranch women is challenging. First and foremost is teaching him or her our methodology of small group learning, presenting research based information, and mentoring to bring about the kinds of results we have come to expect with this program. Once trained, APEFW supports facilitators in many ways such as finding the 'perfect' set of local instructors to tackle topics like lease agreements, government programs, financial documents, and marketing. Another level of facilitator support are the branded classroom supplies that APEFW has developed to compliment the classroom environment. Training and providing supplies have a cost and that is where our partnerships come in.

Partnerships, both in the financial and in-kind support categories, are the foundation of providing this program. Sponsors, organizations, and educational institutions all have their vision and expectations of what educating farm and ranch women entails. I want to thank all the sponsors, Ag organizations, facilitators, and educational institutions for their commitment to this program and especially thank them for the trust they have placed with us to deliver education to farm and ranch women. I could not do this without the work of the trusted Board Members who in this past year have spent precious time in guiding the transformation. Watch for us in 2016 as we continue to meet the demand of farm and ranch women for education and support.

I recall a conversation with an attorney instructor who shared his story making clear his willingness to help with this program. His story was personal and passionate about his mother's struggle with their farm. It was, in part, the reason for him becoming an attorney. APEFW hears all the stories and each time we do; our resolve is strengthened. The heart of APEFW is knowing that all our efforts make a difference in a farm woman's life.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Ruth Black-Holton".

WHO IS ANNIE?

Annie Kohlhagen Fleck grew up in Northern Illinois. Her goal was to marry a farmer and she did. She spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved business partner with her husband. Together they did great things, but it wasn't easy. In honor of her memory, Annie's Project is taking her experiences and current information and sharing them with today's farm women. To read more about Annie's Story, visit www.anniesproject.org/annies-story/

WHAT IS APEFW?

APEFW is an IRS designated 501(c)(3) organization established for the purpose of providing educational and other opportunities to woman farmers and ranchers so that farm women can become effective owners and partners in farm businesses. Programs offered through APEFW are called Annie's Projects.

APEFW has developed a series of classes that address the variety of issues confronted by female farmers and ranchers. Starting with the basic series of six classes, Annie's Project educational programs address topics from the five areas of risk as identified by USDA through succession planning. Assistance is even available in the form of a Borrower Education program.

Programs are localized and conducted in small groups. Women are provided a safe harbor to learn in a stress free, open environment. They are encouraged to contribute their life experiences to facilitate learning from each other. Local specialists provide the skilled guidance needed for the educational process to blossom.

APEFW programs have been offered for thirteen years. The programs have proven to be demand driven with a significant impact, assisting women to develop skills in the areas of information management, financial documents, land ownership and leasing, and marketing commodities. Annie's Project program graduates have learned about estate planning, value added agriculture, and management processes and decisions needed to manage operations and make successful farm or ranch transitions.



Classes have been delivered in 33 states through our training network. The trained educators receive direction and support from their state coordinator. The state coordinators have received the quality training in the materials and program delivery that has become synonymous with Annie's Project. Impact surveys have shown that 94% of the attendees identified the all-women learning environment was important. 76% of the women used their notebooks and material when the class was over and 63% accessed on-line resources provided in the course. Most importantly, 89% shared information garnered through the classes with spouses.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To empower farm women to be better business partners through networks and by managing and organizing critical information.

OUR VISION STATEMENT

Well-being for rural women.

OUR VISION – DR. JASON L. JOHNSON

Dear Friends,

In the spring of 1979, my great-grandmother presented me with a heifer from her prized herd of Angus cattle. As a 10 year-old boy, I was captivated with this gift not realizing that it was all part of her plan to begin teaching me the lessons of good land and animal stewardship. It was also the beginning of my grooming to take over the family's ranching business.

At that time, I did not know or appreciate the sacrifices that my great-grandmother had made, nor the obstacles that she had overcome to keep the ranch profitable and intact for the next generations. Having married into the ranching family, at the age of 25 she found herself managing the ranch and raising a family single-handedly following the disability of my great-grandfather. These were responsibilities that she carried for nearly 70 years.

As a result of that gift, I became immersed in the agricultural industry while keeping my roots grounded on the land that had been treasured in my family by four previous generations. As an agriculture Extension educator, I have always been amazed by the balancing act performed by women raising families and managing farms and ranches. It is no surprise that when I first met Ruth Hambleton and discovered Annie's Project, I knew that I had found an outlet for my passion. It was the perfect channel to pay back (in some small way) the blessings that I had received as a result of a strong-willed and determined female who refused to let setbacks and difficulties derail her chosen path.

For Annie's Project participants, the program provides a support network of other established and aspiring agri-women along with expert insights from practicing professionals. In many cases, it substitutes for the coffee shop network that is often readily available to men. For educators, guest speakers, and sponsors, Annie's Project provides an opportunity to see actionable advice turned into real results by farm/ranch women who use the program to improve their businesses and strengthen their families.

While Annie's Project addresses financial, legal, human, production and marketing risks, the real risks that Annie's Project helps to mitigate are the perils of feeling alone and ill-informed about ways to improve the farm/ranch business. To me, Annie's Project doesn't create farmers and ranchers, we make better agribusiness managers and partners so family legacies can be created, maintained and transferred to future generations. The national reach of Annie's Project is the best program I have seen at empowering farm/ranch women to fulfill this vision!

Sincerely,

Jason Johnson

Annie's Project Executive Board Member



Texas Aberdeen Angus Association Board of Directors 1944 Millersview, Texas

PURPOSE – WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

These photographs are the best answer to the question of why we do what we do – women – women who manage farms and ranches either solo or with a partner or spouse are our motivation.

A crucial step in the success in agriculture is identification and management of the five areas of risk management:

- ❖ Financial
- ❖ Human resource
- ❖ Legal
- ❖ Market
- ❖ Production

Because women have unique learning preferences, they are often not served through traditional farm management education programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines women farmers and ranchers as an underserved audience.

Dr. Jason Johnson, an Executive Board member explained it best when he wrote: “Annie’s Project doesn’t create farmers and ranchers, we make better agribusiness managers and partners so family legacies can be created, maintained and transferred to future generations.”

The creation of legacies that can be maintained and transferred to future generations are the focus of the Annie’s Project Managing for Today and Tomorrow (MTT) program. Key topics are:

- ❖ Succession planning
- ❖ Business planning
- ❖ Estate planning
- ❖ Retirement planning

Women are often the ones to broach the difficult discussions related to retirement and estate planning.



CAPACITY – HOW WE DO WHAT WE DO

METHOD

- ❖ Curriculum was developed from research-based information
- ❖ Trained facilitators and local practitioners deliver the program
- ❖ The environment facilitates learning and fosters mentoring

LEADERSHIP

- ❖ National, state and local program facilitators are trained to identify and recruit learned and capable local program specialists to deliver curriculum materials.

PARTNERING

- ❖ APEFW has developed a national reputation for consistently delivering outstanding programs for farm women and ranchers. National, state and local businesses and organizations often partner in providing resources for women to attend the courses.
- ❖ National, state and private grants are sought and utilized to underwrite and/or augment program funding.

STATE COORDINATORS

- ❖ Currently 32 states have coordinators who serve as liaisons between APEFW and local Annie's Project program providers.

TRAINING

- ❖ Facilitator training programs are offered to accommodate new educators both nationally and locally.

VOLUNTEERS

- ❖ Subject-matter experts donate the time they spend presenting to and working with the participants.
- ❖ Our volunteers have donated in excess of 5,300 hours this year.



Classic Annie's Project mentoring caught in action at a Minnesota session.

FOCUS ON 2015 AND LOOKING FORWARD

This was a year to recognize the impact and importance of building on the momentum generated from the initial program offerings.

THE COMPLETED TRANSITION

In November, all management and program functions for APEFW became housed within the national organization. Many volunteers worked together to complete the transition in a manner that was seamless to the public.

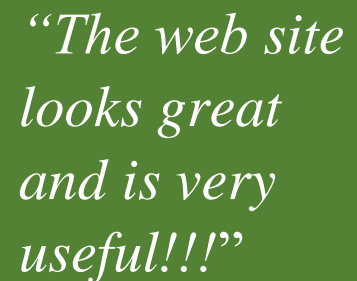
A NEW WAY OF DOING THINGS

The transition provided the opportunity to streamline many of the APEFW processes. Between informational e-mails, instructions on the website and personal communications, everyone had adapted well. The many positive e-mails have been particularly encouraging to those working hard to make the changes beneficial for our volunteers. This phone call from one of our southern states comes to mind: *“Oh I am so thankful that you are doing this for us. As a volunteer it’s a relief to have someone doing something that means one less job for me to do!”*

NEW WEBSITE

The website, which is designed for both the public and as a resource for program facilitators, has been a hit with both. The public has found courses they seek and have used the “contact us” feature to inquire about the program and express their interest. It is a flexible tool providing constantly updated information.

The program facilitators have done a marvelous job adapting to the new website as well. Questions and suggestions have spurred tweaks to reach the coveted “user-friendly” status. E-mails from satisfied facilitators are often an encouragement as well. *“The web site looks great and is very useful!!! Being able to download the PPT files and personalize them to New York certainly helps make my life easier.” – Joan Sinclair Petzen.*



“The web site looks great and is very useful!!!”

NEW LOGO AND TAGLINE

Thanks to the efforts of The Meyocks Group, we now officially have a new logo and tagline. Both are registered trademarks. We appreciate the pro-bono work done by The Meyocks Group.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In May 2015 APEFW ratified Operating Procedures for the organization as well as the Board of Directors. Changes reflect the transition to a single national organization and the goals of the APEFW.

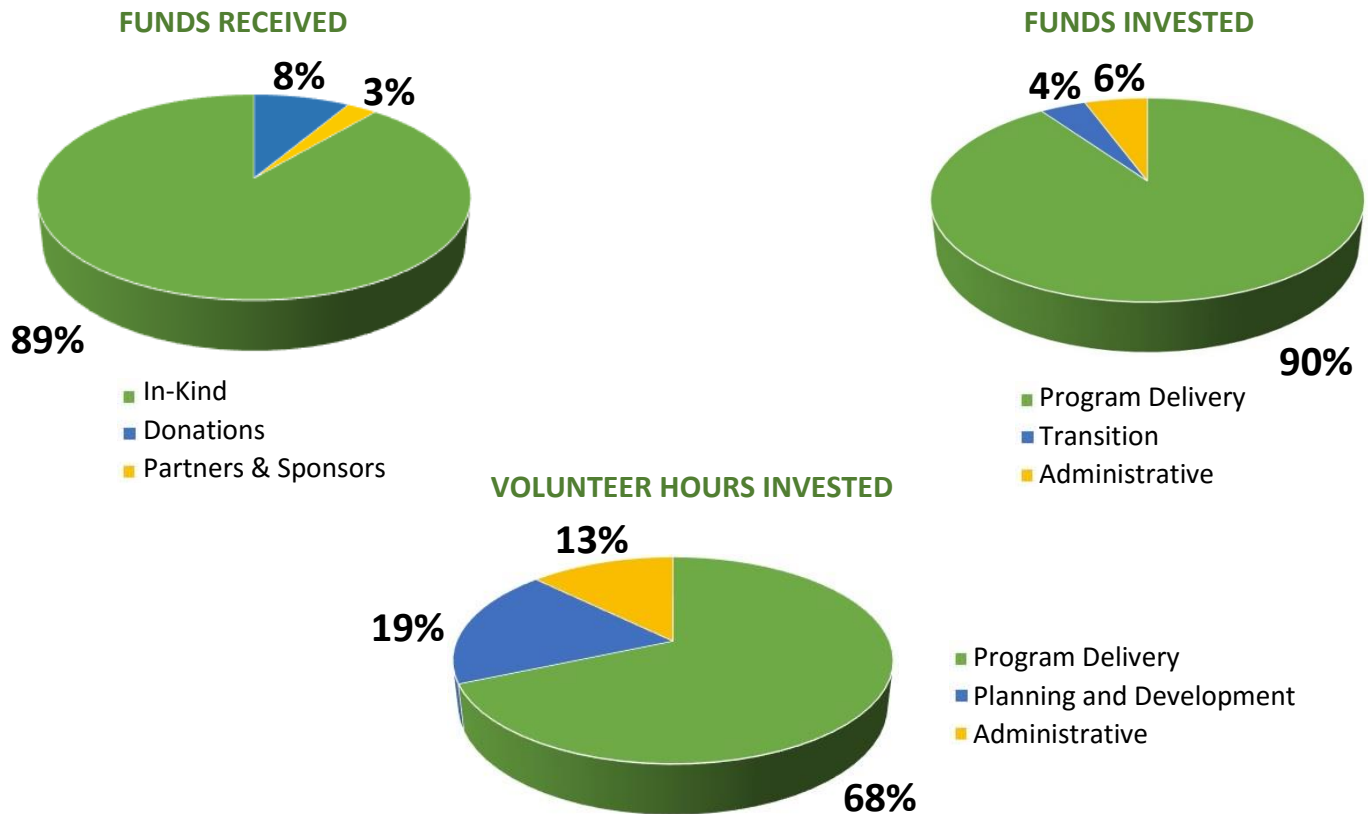
UPDATING CURRICULUM

The need for updating curriculum was identified late in the year. The curriculum committee began this monumental task by identifying all areas that require updates. Completion is anticipated by 2016.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Despite rising costs for many educational classes, the average cost of a course has remained approximately \$300 per student. Cost increases have been off-set by subject-matter experts donating their time to assist in the delivery of the classes. State and local coordinators determine registration fees – typically ranging from \$50 to \$125 depending on the location. Program costs in excess of registration fees collected are paid through various sources such as grants, class sponsorships, and generous contributions from national, state and local businesses and organizations. APEFW makes every effort to maximize the impact of funding received and expertise available from local practitioners, businesses, agencies and partners who share in our mission.

In 2015, there were 52 Annie’s Project courses and nine Managing for Today and Tomorrow courses delivered across the country.



Past annual reports and other financial disclosures are available on the website at <http://www.anniesproject.org/about-us/public-disclosure/>

FOCUS ON OUR VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers are the strength of the organization. They train, plan and promote programs, seek and vet guest speakers and satisfy record-keeping and reporting requirements. They implement the curriculum that was developed, but not without first spending countless hours in preparation to provide participants with the high-quality experience that has come to be associated with an Annie’s Project course.

Additionally, their work in providing the pertinent local information that makes this program successful in the many varying areas of the country is invaluable. All guest speakers are professionals in their field. The time they donate is an important part of a successful program.

FOCUS ON STATE COORDINATORS

State Coordinators are the backbone of APEFW. The state coordinator role may vary somewhat from state to state. However, all coordinators are expected to uphold the APEFW mission, core values and best education practices and all coordinators receive continual support in planning, implementation and evaluation from APEFW.

Generally, the state coordinator serves as the program manager and main point of contact for their state or region. The primary role is to facilitate APEFW in their state and coordinate communication between APEFW headquarters and their local facilitators. Many state coordinators spend many hours writing grant proposals to fund state and local efforts. They also assist the local coordinators in securing materials and quality speakers.

Additionally, some State Coordinators have seized on opportunities to promote the program within their state. For example, this year David Cox and Bonnie Collins, co-coordinators in New York, insured that Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women would be represented at the USDA Women in Ag and Local Foods Roundtable, helping APEFW programs throughout the country.



Adele Harty, Coordinator in South Dakota worked with Lisa Scarborough from ISU to film an Annie's Project panel discussion. The ladies discussed why Annie's Project stands out from traditional farm management education programs and how they benefitted from the program.

<http://www.anniesproject.org/videos/>

FOCUS ON TRAINING

The two-day National Annie's Project Professional Development Conference held in Ames, Iowa in September was hosted by Iowa State University on campus.

The Annie's Project curriculum and best education practices were highlighted along with opportunities for discussion and networking among educators. Stories, slide presentations, panel presentations and group discussions were all part of the professional development event.

The conference trained participants on the program-planning processes of needs assessment, curriculum development, program development, course implementation, and evaluation. Information on sustainable agriculture and farm/ranch business and risk management topics were also presented.

The sponsors of the conference were the North Central SARE Professional Development Program, National Farm Credit Contributions, AgStar Financial, Iowa State University, and Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women.

The conference was attended by 57 guest speakers and educators from 22 states (AL, AR, CO, FL, GA, IA, IL, LA, MI, MN, MO, MS, ND, NE, NH, NJ, NY, OK, SC, TX, WI and WY.)

Participant comments:

"Thanks for your efforts to provide an outstanding program... the Annie's Project national team is to be commended for delivering one of the best training programs I have attended in my 30+ years in agricultural/extension education." - Brent Young, Colorado, 2015

"It was such a pleasure attending the Annie's Project conference and seeing the beautiful ISU campus. I am so grateful... as I met wonderful people and heard success stories from around the country." - Mae Smith, Wyoming, 2015

"It was very motivating to learn with others in my position from all over the country. The conference was well planned and executed and I learned several new things I can use here in NJ." - Jenny Carleo, New Jersey, 2015

IMPACT ON FEMALE FARMERS AND RANCHERS

There are many stories illustrating the passion of our founder, Ruth Hambleton, but nothing sums it up like the lives that have been changed year after year as a result of this program.

BENEFITS CONTINUE:

This alumna continues to see the benefits of participating in an Annie's Project. *"I just wanted to thank you for providing this project to women and particularly to the area where I live when I took it in 2013. It has not only helped me with my planning but it was just accepted as acceptable credit for the Farm Management course the FSA requires anyone who gets one of their loans to take. So I got that waived. Great work."* Meg – WI



ALUMNA IMPACT STATEMENT

"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...As I had more time to watch the finances I was responsible for, I could troubleshoot, decrease waste and increase profits."

PARTICIPANT QUOTES:



"The best thing about the course was the networking and relationships that were developed."

"Annie's Project understands the obstacles that women experience."

"Farm advisors don't just pass me by as the farmer's wife. I'm an integral part of the operation."

"I would tell any woman to join the program. The knowledge you gain is invaluable and instrumental in creating a strong foundation of resources and networking."



ANNIE'S PROJECT – EDUCATION FOR FARM WOMEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women is overseen by a diverse board of talented, knowledgeable and influential people. The Board of Directors is our strongest advocate for Annie's Project programs. As the organization has transitioned to a 501(c)(3), the Board of Directors has focused on strategic growth. This emphasis will assure the continuation of quality programming as the various initiatives expand and new programming is developed.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ruth Hambleton, President
Kelvin Leibold, Vice President
Dr. Jason L. Johnson, Treasurer
Lynn Heins, Secretary



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DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

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OUR GENEROUS FAMILY OF DONORS



IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Numerous generous individuals

Funding for Annie's Project classes relies heavily on the generous in-kind support of industry and educational institutions. Individual registration fees cover approximately 16% to 25% of the class costs. The remainder of expenses are covered by combinations of grants, sponsorships and in-kind contributions.

Annie's Project – Education for Farm Women is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.