A Note from the President:

Where has the time gone? The continued cold and confused seasons should not deceive us, before we know it our busy spring will turn into our busy summer. Over the past month it has been a whirlwind of teaching and learning for our 4-H Youth Development Professionals and the youth and adult volunteers we work with.

In the past week I attended the Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Workshop in Washington D.C. This year’s theme: Celebrating the Past, Leading the Future was very relevant to our ever changing landscape. What was evident in each and every presentation was the value of understanding the past while also recognizing the need to move forward.

The concept of finding the balance between our history in 4-H and what is innovative, relevant, vibrant and diverse is a challenge that we are constantly faced with. Happily, this may mean reframing how we think and communicate needs and impacts with our stakeholders while not eliminating all that we have known and done up until now. It is often frightening when we think we are being told to throw away all that is “old” and start over “anew.” I believe that in the work that we do as representatives of the NYS Association of Cornell Cooperative Extension 4-H Educators we can advocate for what is most important in positive youth development, whether it be steeped in history or seemingly new and innovative. In many cases we know what comes around goes around and that is where the reframing for relevance may come into play.

I am very excited to report that I had the honor of sharing NYS 4-H impacts and stories with our Senators, Congressmen and Legislative Aides. It was refreshing to realize that in many cases they are very aware and supportive of our work. They recognize the changes that have occurred over time and have been assured of the multiple delivery models we use to reach youth in 4-H. Many offered letters and phone calls of support and ideas about potential ideas for funding sources to support our work and I would encourage you to regularly invite them to your programs and special events and communicate the impacts in your counties. Legislatures are especially excited to hear how the 4-H program supports and develops the workforce of tomorrow.

In the time that we spent preparing for and attending meetings on Capitol Hill, I was reminded of the continual need to communicate our public value to our local, state and federal legislatures and all other stakeholders at all levels. We are frequently reminded of the need to plan programs with the “why” in mind and making the evaluation plan right from the beginning. It really is true and while it may seem overwhelming in the scope of all that we must do perhaps that is some of the reframing we must do or some of the history that needs to be rethought.

Here is an excellent example of a 4-H Public Value statement shared in one of the presentations:

4-H project work helps youth explore interests from animal science to aerospace, resulting in increased interest in science at school or after school. We are frequently reminded of the need to plan programs with the “why” in mind and making the evaluation plan right from the beginning. It really is true and while it may seem overwhelming in the scope of what we must do perhaps that is some of the reframing we must do or some of the history that we need to carry on.

Have you seen the website? Visit: http://nys4h.cce.cornell.edu/staff/Pages/NYSACCE4-H.aspx