Kathy Reiser, Associate Regional Director, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Brian Basting of the State Advisory Council called the meeting to order in the absence of President Aaron Steffen. Members present were LeRoy Neitzel, Bill Harrington, Madeline Harris, Dean Adams, Paul Ruff, Carol Perkins, John Gesell, Larry Casey, Josh St. Peters, Matthew Jones, Debbie Winder, Marva Green, Ron Sbertoli, Brian Basting, and Karen Hawthorne. Everyone present introduced themselves, stated which county they were from, and their affiliation with their county.

Nigel Austin, Associate Regional Director, introduced himself and informed the Council of his past work experience. He started as Associate Regional Director for the East Central Region on October 1, 2007. Nigel’s previous positions with University of Illinois Extension include Extension Educator, Community and Economic Development, East Central Region and most recently he served as the Assistant to the Assistant Dean, Urban and Metropolitan Affairs in the Northeast Region.

Unit Reports

Larry Casey – Jasper-Cumberland Co. – The Extension office has partnered with other agencies in providing Farm Safety programs for youth. The Cumberland Co. HEA and Extension will host “Quilts Pointing the Way”. They will explain the use of quilts and their designs in aiding the “underground railroad” during the civil war. Participants will then make blankets for project “Linus.” Ken Larimore, the CED Educator in Jasper County has been instrumental in assisting with several projects, such as the development of Evapco Manufacturing in the former E.R. Moore facility. Cumberland County is currently exploring the possibility of creating a Community & Economic Development position.

John Gesell – Ford County – John presented information on the SET (Science, Engineering and Technology) program, including information on aerospace, alternative fuels, food science, GPS, etc. The program provides hands on learning experience through workshops. The unit is starting a new Ag Literacy Program with Farm Bureau. The program is designed for 4th graders and will begin next spring.

Bill Harrington - Coles Co. – The Master Gardner Program has been in Coles County for over 12 years. The Master Gardeners have developed a Visioning Committee to review where the group came from and to set short-term and long-range goals. The Visioning Committee which started the Review, Evaluation and Visioning (REV) met and discussed ideas, then had an open discussion with the entire membership. Three short-term and one long-range goal were decided upon and were implemented this fall. One of the goals was a new membership directory and a guide is being developed and the monthly meeting structure is being adjusted. Also, this past summer was the 50th anniversary of Coles County’s 4-H livestock auction. A celebration was organized and held this past summer.
Josh St. Peters – McLean Co. – The McLean Unit has added an Ag and Natural Resources CED position. This year the Master Gardner Program celebrated their 10th anniversary. They have over 100 members. Ten 4-apers are getting ready to go to Georgia for Club Congress. McLean County Extension is developing a strategic plan to establish a vision of where it should be in five to ten years.

Marva Green – Richland-Lawrence Co. – The Lawrence Unit partnered with Lawrence Co. Economic Development to hire an Educator and part-time secretary. The Unit also participated in the 4-H SET project and held a county-wide 4-H sign-up party with approximately 120 youth and adults attending, and signed up 41 new members.

Madeline Harris – Crawford Co. - Master Gardners will hold their annual Winter Day in the Garden Program. It goes all day long and they anticipate 200 to 300 attendees. Crawford County held their own county camp, “Around the World with 4-H”. A local church camp was rented for the weekend. The county has held this camp for 20 years. Junior leaders help do the chaperoning and planning of the camp.

Ron Sbertoli – Vermilion Co. – The Internet Masters program is the only one in the State of Illinois. The Unit started the program in 2006 and has taught over 200 students basic and intermediate computer skills. They also have class on searching the Internet. The Veterans Affairs Hospital in Danville donates computers to area schools. Carle Hospital also donates computers and their donations can go to any organization. The goal is to advance computer literacy within the community.

Carol Perkins - Effingham Co. – The Appreciative Inquiry for Shumway program was discussed. The 2007 Central Illinois Tillage Seminar had 150 area farmers and producers in attendance. The Master Gardeners and youth are coordinating more and more in the area.

LeRoy Neitzel - Champaign Co. – The unit held a used tire pick-up and collected over 20,000 tires. They also handed out book marks that discussed West Nile Virus. The hazardous waste pick-up was extremely successful. Champaign is the second county in Illinois to have a Master Naturalist Program.

Dean Adams - DeWitt – The Unit applied and received $2,500 in grants used to fund the Summer Lunch and Fun Program for subsidized kids. The idea was to get the kids to interact with people when in a crisis. They were taught leadership skills. The children had positions of responsibility. They were taught how and when to use 911 and how to stay safe when parents were not home. The Peace Builders Program is being utilized in schools.
to help combat the bullying problem. Some of the same materials used in previous bullying programs were used to keep this issue current in the schools. They had an average of 25 kids each day. This is the third year for the program.

Paul Ruff - Edgar Co. – The Bi-State Ag Program is a combined effort of Purdue Extension and U of I Extension. The group’s goal is to host one program per month, except during the summer. Current programs include landowner lease, cash rent, crops seminar, market outlook, commodity marketing for women, low maintenance landscaping, livestock seminars, timber and pond management.

Matthew Jones - Moultrie-Douglas Co. – There have been many children enrolling in 4-H. The after-school program is growing rapidly and more Educators are needed. Arthur is the largest Amish community in the State of Illinois so there is usually always a representative from Amish community present at the meetings. Moultrie-Douglas Counties have a large Hispanic population; therefore translators are needed to help get information to them. A Personal finance class is being held to help kids learn to budget their money and work in partnership with local businesses.

Debbie Winder – Piatt Co. – Mariann Cook was hired as the new Community Worker for the 4-H program. She is focusing on expanding the 4-H Club enrollment and leadership opportunities. Over 80 people attended the Ag Forum. A Piatt County Master Gardener was recently recognized by the State Master Gardeners for her excellence in program outreach. She received over $20,000 in grants toward garden beautification at the Piatt County Nursing Home. They are currently in the process of submitting two grants for nutrition education and family life to expand the education outreach to senior citizens and young parents. The Unit is working with Macon County to hire a new joint Family Nutrition Program community worker. Four girls from Piatt County participated in the peer-to-peer Program with Ukraine.

The speaker for the evening is Darla Heath, County Extension Director in Livingston County. She has been with U of I Extension for 24 years. Darla spoke about Program Planning & Development. When she started studying this area she realized that there has not been a lot of new research in program development. She noted we should involve people in our programming plans because you find out what they want. She visited Kentucky, Missouri, and Ohio and she also participated in teleconferences with Kansas and Texas regarding this topic. Darla spoke about similarities and differences in Illinois Councils compared to the other states. She noted differences in structures, the way they handle their meetings and how much time they dedicate to programming. The Logic Model is a good tool to use and she explained how they are using it. Darla distributed a hand-out on some of the questions asked and the responses given to the questioned.

Monica Hammerschmidt has been hired as the new Secretary II in the East Central Region Office. The Region will be hiring a replacement for one of the Network Administrators who resigned in September. The advertising for Extension Specialist, Community and Economic Development, Effingham Center and the Champaign County Extension Director positions is closed. Marilyn Brengle, former Champaign County Extension Director accepted the position of Assistant to the Associate Dean, Extension Operations. Michelle Pride Vermilion County
Extension Director retired at the end of September. Advertising for that position will begin at the beginning of 2008. Lisa Ellis, County Extension Director in Edgar County is serving as the Interim County Director for Vermilion County. Due to the budget cuts in Springfield several Youth Development positions will be lost. Kevin Brooks, Extension Educator, Farm Business Management and Marketing has moved from Effingham Center to Champaign Center.

The Regional Offices are now taking on more of the hiring responsibilities which had previously been done on campus. Kathy Reiser’s duties as Associate Regional Director (50%) will be mainly in the area of staff development of non-academic staff. Nigel Austin’s duties as Associate Regional Director will focus more on the program planning, including program reviews, budgets and fiscal.

Election officers:
Chair – John Gesell
Secretary – Debbie Winder

The next meeting will be a teleconference on April 3 or May 8.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by,

Debbie Winder