Dr. Nigel Austin, Interim Regional Director, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Brian Basting of the Extension State Advisory Council, standing in for Chairman John Gessell called the meeting order and introduced guests Pam Weber and Dr. Dennis Campion. Those attending the meeting were Al Smith-Champaign County, Janet Hasten-Clark County, Woody Reinhart-Coles County, Karen Maddox-Crawford County, Dean Adams-DeWitt County, Paul Ruff-Edgar County, Lisa Rexroat-Effingham County, Richard Long-Ford/Iroquois County, Pat Hildebrand-Jasper/Cumberland County, Duane Kiesewetter-Livingston County, Mark Sturgell-Macon County, Kirk Myers-Macon County, Debbie Winder-Piatt County, Garth Whewell-Richland/Lawrence County, Dorothy Ksiaszkiewicz-Vermilion County, and Karen Hawthorne-State Advisory Council. Associate Regional Director Kathy Reiser also attended. Everyone present introduced themselves and told a little bit about themselves.

Pam Weber of Extension Partners talked about how Extension Partners came about, the changes that have taken place since EP was organized, and changes that will hopefully be taking place in the future. The fee to join Extension Partners is going up from $20 to $35. She thinks there will be a new day of cooperation in the State Capitol, in the wake of the election. Pam also discussed some of the new individuals coming to the Senate and House of Representatives. She has a good working relationship with the new Senate leadership, and these new individuals will hopefully be in favor of supporting Extension. Pam stressed that we need to give the legislators ownership. If you want legislators to make good decisions you need to give them enough knowledge to make good decisions. We need to help them develop a different mindset -- that 4-H isn’t just livestock and agriculture. She also pointed out that we need Cook County to help support Extension. Education will always be the number one priority, but Extension should be one of the top three because learning doesn’t stop when you leave the classroom. Extension realizes this and changes with the times. She called on Extension supporters to ask their individual legislators to make Extension funding one of their top three priorities.

Pam also noted that a person likely won’t be effective going outside of their district to influence legislators, but can contact someone that is in another district and asked them to promote Extension. We can also bring people from northern counties to central and southern Illinois to learn about us and then we go there to learn about them and contact older 4-H members to help promote Extension in their area.

Dr. Campion talked about how the deficit is going to mean a rescission. It is going to be a challenging year for Extension. Dr. Campion stressed that we need to keep the momentum going that we got from the coverage we received in Cook County and throughout the state during the fight for getting the funds last spring. If they don’t hear from Extension they won’t support Extension. Extension programs are good; however,
it is just the times we are living in. The councils and local people are doing a good job and we need to pass this on to them.

Administrative Update – Retirements - Ellen Burton, Regional Director. Nigel Austin is currently serving Interim Regional Director. A search will be conducted for a permanent replacement sometime next year, but we're not sure exactly when. Piatt County – Nancy King retired, Darla Heath is filling in as Interim County Director. DeWitt County – Sheryl Hodges retired and hopefully will have a replacement soon. Sherry Fulton is currently the Interim County Director for DeWitt. Jasper County - Don Frederick will be retiring on December 31, 2008. Ruth Ann Vokac, Extension Educator, Youth Development in the Champaign Center will also retire in January.

Don Meyer, McLean County Director is currently serving as Interim County Director in Livingston County until the position is filled.

Most of the hiring is going to be pushed back until after first of the year unless that position is very critical to Extension. All of these retirements won’t be filled before January, and it probably will be several months into 2009.

Election of Officers –

Garth Whewell made a motion which was seconded by Al Smith to nominate Debbie Winder for Chair, motion carried.

Al Smith made the motion that Garth Whewell be elected as Vice-Chair. Debbie Winder seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Garth Whewell made the motion that Pat Hildebrand be elected secretary. Paul Ruff seconded the motion. Motion carried.

The next meeting will be a Telenet on Thursday, May 7 at 7:00 p.m. A letter and agenda will be sent out prior to the telenet with directions for dialing into the teleconference.

Due to the lack of time there were no county reports given orally, but were turned in and are being made a part of these minutes.

Champaign County – The Moonwalk Challenge Program has been completed. There were 1584 participants. Plans are underway for a similar program in 2009. Programs in Champaign County have been very successful this year despite budgeting issues. The county is constantly working on getting the word out about Extension.

Clark County – Received $4,500 from the Regional Alliance for Youth, funding will run through the end of November. Several high school programs were developed including giving students basic skills to help them in the work place, help develop skills in teamwork, communication, and leadership skills. With the help of the grant Clark County was able to hire a part time coordinator who works directly with school
personnel and community leaders to offer programs such as Welcome to the Real Word and Colors training.

Coles County – Farm Safety program for 4-6 graders was held in Oakland in October. Oakland FFA, Farm Bureau, Extension, and others from the community presented programs on such things as ATV safety, tractor safety, Home Alone, etc. All students received a Farm Safety t-shirt. This was sponsored by a grant from Carle Foundation. Mark Cox, Coles County Master Gardener received the Salute to Excellence award in Ohio. He was nominated last fall and was chosen as the top leader for the East Central Region and the state of application.

Crawford County – A Winter Day in the Garden will be held on January 24th at Lincoln Trail College with Roger Swain, former host of The Victory Garden on PBS. A robotics workshop was held in August with 13 youth participating. Marathon Petroleum provided pizzas and an intern to lead the group, Next Chapter Books provided the location, Regional Office of Education provided seven laptops, and seven LEGO robotic kits were borrowed from the State 4-H Office. HCE members attended a series of programs including Online Shopping, Earthquake Disaster Preparedness and Choosing a Financial Professional. Hope Dennis is still doing her food and nutrition programs. A 4-H after school program has been formed with the ACE After School students.

DeWitt County – Several workshops were held this summer including Sewing and Jewelry Making, Art in the Kiwanis Park, Team Building, and Kids in the Kitchen. Several camps were held at Weldon Springs State Park included studying ponds, learning GPS, hiking and fishing, and frogs, toads and salamander workshop. Stewardship Days was held at Weldon Springs. This is a field trip involving elementary students. Cammy Seguin taught a lesson on nutrition at the High Rise Housing Development. A Jr. Leadership Academy for 24 4th and 5th grade students was held. Other events included 4-H Show, 4-H BBQ, and 4-H Achievement Program. Three Cloverbud Clubs have been organized this year.

Edgar County – On December 13 4-H Federation/Draft Busters are having a paper recycling kickoff at the 4-H Fairgrounds. Some of the items being accepted are newspapers, plain and colored paper, shredded paper, pizza boxes, cardboard boxes, magazines, comic books, catalogs, books, old hymnals. They will be doing this again on January 10, 24 and every second and fourth Saturday of the month after that. Applegate, Inc. will be shredding our product for chemical-free green insulation.

Ford-Iroquois County – Presentations are being offered to 4th grade classes three times this year. Ag Career presentations are available for Jr. High and High School kids. Teachers have been made aware of programs, activities, and materials available to them through the Extension office. AITC Advisor Committee meet in September to review the grant that was received and make plans for the current year. They will meet again in December and again in the spring and summer. During National 4-H Week, a Keeping IT Green Event was held on November 15. Items collected including TVs and computer monitors. On October 8 4-Hers from Ford-Iroquois joined others in the first National 4-H Youth Science Day.
Jasper-Cumberland Counties – Don Frederick County Director will be retiring in 43 days. Current programs including PSEP, Livestock Management, Welcome to the Real World, and help out handouts into Toys for Tots bags. Jr. and Sr. Ambassador county wide program has 20 youth involved in this program. The youth have to apply and go through an interview process. Some of their jobs include helping with Achievement Night, workshops, etc.

Livingston County – Some of the programs that have been promoted within the last year focus on family and consumer science. These programs were presented to the elementary school and hopefully will be expanded to the junior high and high school. Also co-sponsored with HCE/FCS were 2 workshops with almost 20 participants at each session. 4-H Achievement Night was held with over 200 in attendance. Livingston County was proud to announce that they have the first Club Congress delegate in many years. There are 19 clubs this year reaching over 500 youth. Emerald Ash Borer is becoming quite an issue as Livingston County and it is now a quarantined county with adjacent counties infested. A crop lease workshop was held with nearly 80 participants. The Interim County Director is maintaining networks with the coalition trying to address the teen alcohol problems in the county.

Macon County – Twenty-eight elementary teachers participated in a summer horticulture institute. They participated in hands-on garden activities such as propagating houseplants, learning to measure a tree’s height, watched photosynthesis in action, participated in outdoor activities. The teachers also learned about different programs offered such as Plants 101, and Agriculture in the Classroom.

McLean County – The Family and Consumer Science team has been busy with programs such as Caregivers Day Out, Financial Fitness Workshop, Cyber Seniors Workshops, and nutrition classes for school and after school classes. The have gotten three banks to support three consumer financial programs. The Community and Economic Development Team has scheduled several events this fall including Teens in Prevention Conference, Career Expo, job shadowing, and participation in Engaging Generations Training. The 4-H Youth Development team held a successful 4-H Recognition of Excellence Program. McLean County has eight delegates to Club Congress this year. Learn and Fun Day planning is underway. After school programs have been a success and are expanding with the help of a State Farm grant to allow growth in participants and space. In-School programs are underway with Chick It Out and Hungry Planet. The Agriculture and Natural Resource team are planning a Home Lawn Garden Day on March 7, 2009. A new class of incoming Master Gardeners will be welcomed, a permanent Idea Garden is being planned, and there is a lot of interest in the plastic pot recycling program. Emerald Ash Borer continues to be a concern.

Moultrie-Douglas County – There were 100 participants and vendors attending Illinois Dairy Day. Maxi Fitzjarrald and Lori Anderson completed training and became the units first Master Naturalists. Elementary students were taught about sugar cane and how it is processed. Kindergarteners were taught about farming in Hawaii. 4th and 6th graders attended environmental Stewardship Day for Douglas County and Conservation Day in Moultrie County. Master Gardeners taught seven 4th grade classes about alternative
energy and vermin composting. Master Gardeners also assisted in a Living Green Workshop with 33 local teachers to learn about making rain barrels, recycling, etc. The Junior Master Gardening Camp was held for 8 weeks this summer in Arcola which was open to 4th and 5th graders that want to learn more about plants and gardening. Eight caregivers attended Powerful Tools for Caregiving workshop where they were taught stress reduction techniques, positive communication methods and skills in decision making. Walk Around Illinois had 144 county residents participate. They walked a total of 7800 miles with the top walker walking 788 miles. The Family Nutrition Program delivered programs on recipes, food safety, food budgeting, prenatal and infant nutrition information to young mothers. They also presented programs to local schools, libraries, community and senior centers, grocery stores, and food pantries. Also through this program nutritional newsletters and fact sheets were printed and distributed in both English and Spanish. 4-H programs and activities held were Walk in my Shoes, Conservation Field Day, Operation Safe Kids, Welcome to the Real World, Matrixx Colors, Get Up and Moves, Farm Safety Day, and a summer library program.

Piatt County – Nancy King the County Director retired on September 30. Darla Heath will be the Interim County Director until approximately the end of February. On February 19 Piatt County will host a program on Healthy Living with Parkland College. Upcoming events include a Make It Take it Workshop in December, a Card Making Workshop in January, and Valentine Party at the Piatt County Nursing Home in February. Several new projects are being investigated including a bike drive and a community garden project.

Richland-Lawrence County – On Thursday, March 5 the Lawrence County 4-H Center is having a health fair for senior citizens. The focus will be on healthy living and how seniors can enhance the physical, emotional, financial and spiritual aspects of their lives.

Respectfully submitted,

Deb Winder, Secretary