

# Actiongram

September 2017

## Greetings from Iowa!

It seems like Mother Nature has been on a roll lately. Between the hurricanes and the wildfires, the news can be almost overwhelming. What really has been overwhelming is agriculture's response to those hard times of its own. We've all seen many videos of livestock being herded to safety by cowboys in flood water, putting their animal's safety before their own. And, although the fires have been burning all summer, the ranchers of Montana and the western states are finally getting some national media attention that we all hope will bring additional relief funds as these farmers and ranchers start to rebuild their lives.

In agriculture, we are lucky. Through the ashes and devastation, those whom we serve will rise up, and in some cases be stronger than before. I can't fathom the hundreds of miles of fence that will be built in the next year. When I see a load of hay—or loads of hay-- headed west or south, I get goose bumps because it means there is more help on the way. The sheer head count of livestock lost just this summer is staggering. Sometimes sitting

here at my desk I feel a little helpless in these situations. But we aren't. Words instilled in me by my folks come to mind: "Figure out what it is you need to do to help, and do it." And that is why we are the lucky ones! American agriculture shows up to help and gets it done.

In central Iowa we are fortunate to have a group of LPC members that meets quarterly for breakfast—and for a little stress relief. That meeting happened in the time frame I was working on this column. Taking advantage of such a distinguished pool of talented ag communicators, I polled the group for some only-in-ag humor and stress relief ideas. I dare you not to laugh or commit an eye-roll or two over what they shared.

Among our group, there was once a young child who spent a lot of time in the pig barn with his parents while

they were breeding sows. Apparently the process of artificial insemination was not lost on him, as his mother went on to tell. While company was visiting, the child was playing quietly behind them—using detailed and proper AI techniques on his rocking horse. As you can imagine, the story brought laughter from our table, although it may have been a bit hard for that mother to explain to her

company. This of course led us to a conversation about breeding and delivery that I am quite sure left those around us a little baffled, and in some cases questioning our laughter.

The next part of the conversation reflected on my earlier point about  
*continued on next page*



*Cindy Cunningham*  
2017-18  
LPC President

**"Figure out what it is you need to do to help, and do it."**

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Photo credit: Lisa Bryant



Each month watch for a winning photo from the Best of the Bunch competition held at AMS.

being the lucky ones. We all agreed the best part of our job is interviewing farmers and ranchers and spending time on their farms, learning their stories—then being able to share them with others.

Our group turned more serious and focused on stress relief from a busy summer that soon will transition into the approaching holiday season. As my friends each shared their particular stress relief or happy place, I could picture them in each of these scenes. I bet you can too. What you'll not find surprising is the common theme that ties us all together. One said spending time in her barn was her favorite place on earth. Another enjoyed pulling weeds and feeling that you have accomplished something good where you can see the results. And yet another thought her pasture was just about the best place on earth, enjoying the amazing life around her. I'm guessing these descriptions "took you there." The sights, the sounds and the smells. You've been there and each of these means something to you, too.

I know we as LPC members are spread across the country. I would encourage you to connect, really connect, with others in LPC. Start an instant message group with some LPC friends, possibly schedule some face time and get to know another member or two. If you are lucky enough to be in a location with many members, meet for breakfast or lunch. What you gain from these professionals who understand you and respect your work, is more than what you will ever invest in these simple tactics.

As I wrap this up, I leave you with the wisdom of our breakfast group--work hard and appreciate your accomplishments, look for the beauty around you, and take time to rejuvenate along the way. Oh yes, and don't forget to laugh—a lot!

*Cindy*

## Report from Utah

by Christy Lee, winner of one of LPC's stipends for 2017

Being a freelance writer and photographer, I was beyond appreciative to receive a LPC stipend to attend the 2017 Ag Media Summit in Snowbird, Utah.

As much as I'd like to pretend I'm young, I've attended these events for many years. And each year, I'm continually impressed with the takeaways that directly benefit my business.

One session that left me scribbling in my notebook to capture these nuggets of information: Interview Basics: 20 Questions You Never Thought to Ask. In this session, storytellers extraordinaire **Jamie Cole**, Red Barn Media; **Pam Smith**, DTN/Progressive Farmer; **Martha Mintz**, Corral Creek Communications; **Max Armstrong**, This Week in Agribusiness/Penton Agriculture, and moderator **Holly Spangler**, Prairie Farmer/Penton Agriculture shared their best interview tips, techniques and questions.

I took these ideas home and began utilizing them immediately. And truly – they work.

A few of my favorites:

### From **Martha**:

1. Use your eyes to formulate questions. As you look around the office or home of your subject, what do you see that could help tell the story? The belt buckle collection. A unique photo or award. What could this tell you that you wouldn't otherwise know?
2. How did XYZ make you feel?
3. How did it make your husband or wife feel? When you ask with a smile, it can cause your subject to open up.

### From **Jamie**:

1. Ask yourself: How can I make this story unique? What differentiates this person from others?
2. What do you do that your neighbor doesn't?
3. What do you read/watch/listen to? Finding out the music, non-farm magazines and TV shows that your subject enjoys can help you get to the true essence of who they are.

### From **Pam**:

1. Do your research. Then prioritize your questions with your theme or objective in mind.
2. Make it a conversation, not an inquisition.
3. Use silence to get answers.

### From **Max**:

1. Start with easy conversation, then move to the tougher questions.
2. Always ask at the end of the interview: Is there anything we didn't cover?
3. Listen to the answer, instead of thinking of the next question.

### From **Holly**:

1. What is one thing that is directly tied to your success?
2. What is the lesson that took you the longest to learn?
3. What did you not see coming?
4. Always keep it to one question at a time. Don't ask two-part questions, as it can lead to the source answering either/or/none of the question.

Give a few of these questions a try during your next interview. I am certain: you will be glad you did.

*At the summer LPC board of directors meeting this program was re-named the Don Norton Professional Development Scholarship in honor of long-time friend and supporter. His name will be forever honored with this award for LPC members to improve their skills and knowledge.*





# Best of the Bunch Winners

## Start saving your favorite photos for next year's Best of the Bunch competition!

Here's another popular contest held during the Ag Media Summit each summer which brings out the photography buffs. It is named after **Paul Andre**, retired editor of *BEEF* magazine and long time coordinator of the contest. Cash prizes are awarded with the top photo printed on the cover of the LPC Directory. Categories include: a) Livestock; b) Livestock industry people; c) Livestock scenic (such as a landscape); d) General (the sky's the limit!) This is a great contest for staff members who can't attend the Summit, but still want to participate as you don't have to be present to win!



*psst!  
The winner was  
a black and  
white photo*

### Best of the Bunch Winner and People Category

1st - Katy Kemp - Cultivate Agency



### People

2nd - Erin Worrell, The Rancher's Resource



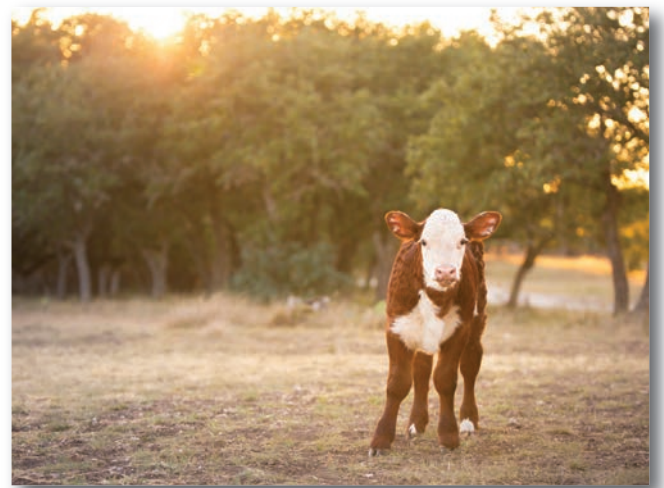
### People

3rd - Christy Lee, Cee Lee Photography



**Livestock**

1st - Erin Worrell, The Rancher's Resource



**Livestock**

2nd - Erin Worrell, The Rancher's Resource



**Livestock**

3rd - Katy Kemp, Cultivate Agency



**Scenic**

1st - Miranda Reiman, Certified Angus Beef



**Scenic**

2nd - Katy Kemp, Cultivate Agency



**Scenic**

3rd - Lisa Bryant, Cowboy Connection



**General**

*1st: Erin Worrell, The Rancher's Resource*



**General**

*2nd -Katy Kemp, Cultivate Agency*



**General**

*3rd -Katy Kemp, Cultivate Agency*

# “Dealing with Difficult People”

*Wed., September 20 from 10-10:45 a.m.*



**CLIFF BECKER**

*Farm Journal Media Vice President  
Publishing Director, Livestock*



**HOLLY MARTIN**

*High Plains/Midwest Ag Journal  
Publisher*



Join the chat at <https://meet.illinois.edu/jshike/BM438R9F>.  
Or call 888-983-3631, Conference ID: 65943472.