**Extension’s Image in Your Community**…**a brief review**

**What is it?**

* Various groups and individuals will view your organization differently depending on the experiences they have or have not had with Extension or similar groups. For example, the experiences and expectations of welfare mothers in a housing project will be different than those of a well-established group of business people.

**Why is it important?**

* Getting a better idea of how people in your community view Extension will help you identify your strengths and weaknesses relevant to the different audiences you hope to reach. Understanding community perceptions and expectations informs you of how to develop a strategy for involving more people in worthwhile programs.
* The more positive your image is to the public the better your chances are for gaining community support for your programs. People are more likely to become involved in programs that are real to them; if they see a benefit for themselves or their community; or if they think your programs are stimulating and interesting – not dull and confusing.

**How do I do it?**

* Take a long hard look at Extension programs in your community. Evaluate program outcomes and successes to determine areas of strength and weaknesses. Identify any weak links you might be able to strengthened, redirect, rethink, or remove.
* **Ask yourself:**
* Are you known for working solely with one or two interest groups within the community?
* Have you ignored certain groups of people entirely in your work?
* Do you shy away from free and open discussion on some issues?
* If the answer to any of these questions is yes, probably some people in your community feel Extension does not serve their needs. These people are less likely to become/or stay-involved in your programs unless you repair your image. It is difficult and time-consuming to reverse a negative image, but it is essential if you expect to provide effective programs that generate trust and public involvement.