

How Texas Rural Leadership Program Was Formed:

By: Keelie Wendt

COLLEGE STATION, TX –Texas Rural Leadership Program (TRLP) assists rural entities in an effort to create positive change by developing human capital at a local level. This week we are taking a deeper look into how the Texas Rural Leadership Program was founded. One founder of the Texas Rural Leadership Program is Dr. Lynn White, a retired family economics specialist with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

The Texas Rural Leadership Program was founded in 1989 when a Lutheran minister, Bob Green from Liberty, paid a visit to Dr. White. He asked for help to start a rural leadership program. Dr. White said, “I had chaired the Extension Leadership issue Task Force and we found in the community forum results that Leadership Development was a major issue in every component of Extension programming.” She coordinated the Family Community Leadership program and knew that if an opportunity arose to help others with their leadership skills, then community members would come together and help strengthen their communities.

Another founder came in a year later from New Hampshire. Dr. Bonnie McGee started working in the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Director’s office in 1990. Dr. McGee’s job “was to call together all the different people in Extension on campus who were working in Leadership to see what we could do for rural Texas.” She would help bring together entities and provide curriculum resources for them.

Through their work, 43 agencies and organizations committed to addressing the lack of leadership skills in rural communities. Dr. White said, “The Texas Electric Coop Executive Director stepped up to chair meetings to see what each partner could contribute to launch the program. Within a year we had organized a 501c3, Texas Rural Leadership Program, had a team develop the first curriculum for eight lessons focusing on leadership skills, and appointed an executive director from Luling Chamber of Commerce.”

The spirit of its founding continues through its affiliation with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Dr. Craig Rotter, Executive Director, works to meet rural leadership needs across Texas with an extended set of services and program designed to make a sustainable, positive difference. Learn what Texas Rural Leadership Program can do for you and your community. Contact us: TRLP.tamu.edu; craig.rotter@ag.tamu.edu; 979.845.2035.