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Muse embracing new regional ag role for KCTCS

By Don Wilkins Messenger-Inquirer
Feb 17, 2022



Troy Muse looks over a presentation before a meeting with farmers Thursday at Owensboro Community & Technical College.

Photo by Greg Eans, Messenger-Inquirer | geans@messenger-inquirer.com

For Troy Muse, it took retirement for him to return to his agricultural roots.

In May 2021, Muse, 54, became the region's adult agricultural coordinator and young farmer advisor for the Kentucky Community and Technical College System.

Although Muse majored in agriculture at Western Kentucky University, he spent 30 years working in the chemical industry and farmed some on the side.

"I'm kind of getting back into the area of interest where I wanted to be," said Muse, who retired from Dow Chemical in Elizabethtown. "It just took a long time to get there."



Muse, a Hardin County native, said his job doesn't get into agriculture-related policies, but it is meant to guide farmers and provide educational opportunities.

"We don't deal in politics or anything like that; we're strictly an education benefit," Muse said.

Muse's office, which is based out of Owensboro Community and Technical College, covers Daviess, Hancock, Ohio and McLean counties.

During the colder months — November through March — Muse said he conducts educational meetings with a guest speaker and a "topic of some importance," such as estate and succession planning, the constraints and costs of chemicals and various livestock production.

"Our economy is changing so much, and a lot of people are trying to diversify and hit some different niche markets," Muse said. "And throughout the year, I will do farm visits with different farmers; I will look at their operations or answer any questions they may have for me."

He added that if he can't give an answer, he will find an expert who can.

"I'm kind of a resource for these young farmers," he said.

During the planting and harvesting months, Muse partners with the Daviess County Extension Office, aiding with crop plots and yield contests.

Clint Hardy, Daviess County's agriculture extension agent, said having Muse is an asset for farmers.

Hardy added that the agencies conducted the crop plot programs separately until it was realized several years ago that it made more sense for them to work together.

"We pool our resources, labor and time to work with local farms in planting multiple, variety plots throughout the county in the spring each year," Hardy said. "And then we return in the fall to weigh those plots at harvest, collect and provide that data to local farms as well as western Kentucky and southern Indiana. They use that information to make seed purchasing decisions for the following crop year."

Another priority for Muse has been building up the membership of the the Daviess County Young Farmers chapter, which is under the umbrella of the Kentucky Young Farmers Association.

Although the average U.S. age for farmers is 57.5 years old, Muse said Daviess County is unique in that it boasts more young farmers than many agriculture communities.

"The United States does have a big drop off in young farmers, and farmers are aging out," Muse said.

"But in this area, we really do have a lot of young farmers, which is unusual in a lot of places."

One of Muse's goals is to get as many young farmers involved with the local association and coming to meetings.

Muse said he started the Daviess County Young Farmers Association Facebook page, which has helped draw attention to the chapter. It's there that he posts upcoming educational meetings and shares agriculture-related news.

"The young people are definitely in tune to anything that's social media," Muse said.

So far, Muse has signed up more than 100 members to the Daviess County Young Farmers chapter.

Through sponsorships, Muse said the chapter has been able to pay the \$10 annual membership fee for anyone who wanted to join this year.

"I said, 'this way you can see if this is a group that's beneficial to you, and if you want to be part of it, you're not out anything,' " said Muse about his approach to paying for the initial membership fee.

Muse and his wife, Debbie Muse, who retired from teaching agriculture at Apollo High School, moved in October to a farm in McLean County off of Kentucky Highway 250.

Muse said they plan to raise meat sheep on the farm.

"It had all been in crop for the last 30 years, so we're having to upgrade everything to be able to have livestock," said Muse of his farm.

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