



PennState Extension

Penn State Extension Business Structure

Penn State Extension Associate Directors

Associate Director of Programs – Jeff Hyde

Jeffrey joined Penn State in 2000 as assistant professor of agricultural economics with responsibilities in extension and research. His work focused on economic factors affecting farm-level technology adoption decisions with analyses of genetically modified corn, robotic milking systems, and methane digesters. Over time, his work expanded to include consumer research, helping to better understand how consumers perceive food labels, Pennsylvania wines, and other foods. He became Extension's State Program Leader for agricultural entrepreneurship in 2008 and took on the responsibility of Assistant Director of Programs for Energy, Entrepreneurship, and Community Development in 2012. Outside of work, Jeff serves as an elected member of the Penns Valley Area School Board. He and his wife live in Centre Hall and have two children, Brennan and Jenna.

Associate Director of Client Relations – Tara Mondock

Tara comes to us with a background in business administration and marketing. Tara was previously employed by eSolutions, Inc. in Kansas where she was the Chief Revenue Officer and Senior Vice President – Strategic Partner Sales. Tara's past experience will be greatly beneficial as she and others work diligently to hire the new team of CRMs and as she and her new team begin to build organizational and brand awareness, support and expand existing and new client relationships, serve as organizational liaisons, and ensure excellent customer service and satisfaction to our clientele. In her short time with us, she's already begun to make important contributions as we implement Extension's new business model. She and her new team of CRMs will play a major role in assuring that Penn State Extension realizes its vision of, "We believe all citizens should have access to unbiased science based education."

Associate Director of Business Operations – Stephen Buchholz

A Pennsylvania native, Steve earned a bachelor's degree in Mass Communication/Journalism from Mansfield University before a nearly 10-year career as a newspaper reporter in Elmira, NY, and Rapid City, SD. He transitioned from journalism to a career in higher education, serving the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, a science and engineering university, and Western Dakota Technical Institute, a technical college, both in Rapid City, SD. His higher education experience includes work in business operations, marketing, public relations, accreditation, program development, fund-raising, institutional effectiveness, strategic planning, and more. He has earned a master's degree in Administrative Studies/Human Resources from the University of South Dakota and is currently pursuing a Doctorate of Business Administration. Steve enjoys hunting, fishing, other outdoor activities, and spending as much time as possible with his wife Cindy, and their 10-year-old son Derek.

Penn State Extension Client Relations Managers

Client relations managers located across the Commonwealth are tasked with working with county stakeholders, commissioners, and councils, raising awareness of the breadth of extension products and services available to them, defining local issues and needs, and working with program teams to bring the full resources of extension to bear on these issues. They will serve as the primary point of contact for Extension in the area they serve.

Area 1: Jon Laughner

Prior to joining Penn State Extension in 2004, Jon was a national sales manager for the First Energy Corp. There he led a team throughout the Midwest and Northeast selling energy solutions to large industrial customers. He joined Extension initially to help build entrepreneurial communities in the agricultural market. He transitioned to the Energy Team-Natural Gas working with property owners, legislators, and entrepreneurs to understand the implications of regional drilling activity. He has presented for community residents and officials, industry, and government officials in the shale gas footprint, regionally, and internationally. Just prior to assuming the Area 1 Client Relations Manager position, he served as the Extension District 1 District Director serving Erie, Crawford, and Mercer Counties.

Area 2: Melissa Sankey

Melissa has an extensive background in production agriculture; growing up and working on her family's dairy farm. Melissa earned her Bachelor's Degree in Agribusiness Management from Penn State University. She also holds a Masters of Business Administration with a focus on Global Executive Leadership from Delaware Valley University. Melissa's professional experiences lend well to her educational background. She has previously worked for Penn State Extension as the 4-H Livestock Educator in Adams County. Melissa has also worked for Pennsylvania's premiere agribusiness association, PennAg Industries Association. While working for PennAg, Melissa interfaced with regional regulators and constituents to grow and enhance Pennsylvania agribusiness; providing her unique opportunities to work with legislators and respected agribusiness organization. Her current role at Penn State is as the Program Manager for the Center for Professional Personnel Development.

Area 3: Mark Madden

Mark is a 1986 Agronomy graduate of Penn State University. Mark has worked for Penn State Extension since 1994 providing agronomy, water quality and, more recently, energy development programming with an emphasis on private water supplies, and its impacts on agriculture and landowners. Immediately prior to Extension, he worked for the Bradford County Conservation District under the Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Management Program promoting best management practices and administering the financial assistance program. After his time with the Chesapeake Bay Program, he was a crop consultant with the Sulbra Crop Management Association. He currently resides on the family property in Asylum Township of Bradford County with his wife, a school teacher at Towanda Area School District. They have two daughters. With his personal time, he manages and maintains a certified (Family Forest) Tree Farm to optimize the timber production and recreational opportunities on the property.

Area 4: Stephen Alessi

Stephen Alessi received a BS in Business Management from Geneva College in 2006. He began his career after graduation with The Sherwin-Williams Company and has held a wide variety of positions during his 11 years with the company. From starting as an assistant manager, moving into a store manager position, and eventually into an outside sales representative position, Stephen has focused on developing long lasting and valuable business relationships. The last 7 years, Stephen has been an outside sales representative in the Stroudsburg, Mount Pocono, and Milford area. During his time at Sherwin-Williams, Stephen went back to school and completed his MBA at Wilkes University in 2010. Stephen and his wife Karen currently live in the Mountain Top area with their two children.

Area 5: Maureen Casey

Maureen is a State College native who graduated from Penn State in 1995 with a BA in psychology. After college she relocated to the Philadelphia area and began a career as a territory marketing manager for American International Group. A position with Progressive Insurance as a Senior Marketing Manager brought her back to central PA and eventually she took a position with The Hartford Insurance in the same capacity. After 13 years in the insurance industry she made a drastic change to veterinary medicine, first as a veterinary technician and eventually as the Client Care Coordinator at Metzger Animal Hospital, where her primary responsibilities was to improve the client experience, facilitate the care and communication between clients and staff, and address conflicts or sensitive situations. In her spare time she enjoys gardening and spending time outdoors. Maureen is also a vital part of the volunteer network at Centre County PAWS where she serves as one of the medical coordinators as well as area animal rescues.

Area 6: Thomas Beresnyak

With nearly 20 years of experience in business, government and politics, Tom primarily managed multi-faceted issue advocacy campaigns for clients focused on federal and state legislative affairs. Tom's expertise lies in evolving new and innovative ways to connect organizations with media, stakeholders, and public officials, through traditional and digital strategies alike. Tom most recently managed government affairs clients as an independent consultant and was marketing manager for a manufacturing start-up. He was associate principal at Duane Morris Government Strategies (formerly GSP Consulting), from 2006-2013. Prior to joining that firm, he served as a senior sales professional at Verizon Wireless. Tom earned an MBA from Duquesne University and a BA in International Politics from The Pennsylvania State University.

Area 7: Jeff Hackenberg

Jeff has spent his entire career in sales, serving retail customers, contractors, manufacturers, and healthcare practices. Most recently he worked in pharmaceutical sales, serving healthcare professionals and their patients. For the last twelve years, Jeff has enjoyed his involvement with the Boy Scouts of America, in serving as Den Leader, Adult Volunteer, and Assistant Scoutmaster. Jeff grew up in Hollidaysburg, and is looking forward to relocating his family to the Central Pennsylvania region.

Area 8: Vacant

Area 9: Stephanie Shirk

Stephanie Shirk has worked for over 15 years as a communications consultant and non-profit organization manager for a diverse range of organizations, including New Holland Agriculture, Fritz & Associates, and The Pennsylvania FFA Foundation. Prior to joining Penn State Extension, she also worked as a Development Specialist at Penn State Harrisburg for the Office of Development and Alumni Relations. Growing up on a dairy farm in Nebraska and graduating from Millersville University with a degree in Speech Communication, Stephanie's varied background in agriculture, communications, public relations, organizational management, development and digital media provides a solid foundation for coordinating Penn State Extension's efforts for Lancaster, Lebanon, Chester, Schuylkill and Berks counties. Stephanie and her husband Jim live on the family's Bicentennial Family Farm in eastern Lancaster County with their three children, Samantha, Sarah and Luke.

Area 10: Vacant

Penn State Extension Business Operations Managers

Business operations managers manage the operations of county extension offices in their area, providing a network for program delivery. They work to implement best practices, standardize systems and procedures across the organization, including financial and risk management, human resources, program registration, administrative support, and information technology. They will serve as the primary contact for facility and business operations in the area.

Area 1: Bryan Dickinson

Bryan has worked with Penn State Extension since 1998 as the 4-H Extension Educator in Lawrence County. He has served as the chair of the 4-H Work Group Positive Youth Development for the past three years. Bryan has also served as chair for the Northwest PA 4-H camp as well as the Western PA 4-H Teen Leadership Retreat.

Area 2: Tony Siliano

Tony graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management, as well as receiving an MBA degree from Gannon University. Tony's experience includes both corporate and entrepreneurial business roles, as he led a multi-state and county Real Estate Title Insurance/Closing and Finance organization for approximately ten years. His experiences include operational optimization, finance and budgeting, and operational management. Tony has been involved in leadership roles within civic, community health, youth development, education, and spiritually based organizations. He resides in Warren, PA with his wife Lisa a Maternal Child Health RN, daughter Brooke and son Rocco.

Area 3: Lana Adams

Lana Adams has deep roots in agriculture and rural Area 3. She grew up a 4-H'er in Susquehanna County, received her Bachelor of Science (Biology) degree from Lycoming College in 1998 and her Master of Science (Entomology) from Penn State in 2001. She began her public service career with a one-year appointment in Franklin County Extension, then on to state government for more than 14 years' administrative leadership experience with the Pennsylvania Departments of Agriculture and Health. Most recently, Lana and her family moved "home" to Susquehanna County, where she has worked for county government and a local family-owned agribusiness, Andre & Son. Lana and her husband Reggie are experiencing the joys of raising their two daughters (Lillia, 9 and Lorena, 6) in a rural community with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins nearby. When she isn't at work, Lana greatly enjoys baking and gardening.

Area 4: Dave Messersmith

Dave started his career with Penn State Extension in 1997 as an agronomy educator based in Union county. He moved to Wayne County in 1998 where he provided agronomy and pesticide education programs. Dave joined Extension's Shale Education Team in 2008 and delivered programs on Marcellus shale and natural gas – focusing on natural gas pipeline development – throughout Pennsylvania, nationally and internationally. He has authored several Extension publications on the topic. Dave served on Governor Wolf's Pipeline Infrastructure Task Force. Dave is currently an Interim District Director in Pike and Wayne County. He holds Bachelors and Master's Degrees in Agronomy from Penn State University.

Area 5: Tom Walker

Tom began his career with Penn State Extension as the 4-H Educator in Washington County and soon moved into the 4-H Horse and Livestock Specialist position. He then relocated to Virginia Tech Extension where he established a 4-H foundation and served as the first Executive Director of the Virginia 4-H Foundation and Development Specialist for Extension. He accepted a position as the County Extension Director in Morgan County, West Virginia with the West Virginia Extension Service before returning to Penn State Extension as the County Extension Director in Mifflin County and Director of the Penn State Lewistown Center for Outreach and Continuing Education. Tom also served as a multi-county Extension Director for Juniata and Mifflin Counties and recently has been the District Director for Extension District 13. He is an avid gardener and enjoys showing his Quarter Horses.

Area 6: Joseph Conklin

Prior to joining Penn State Extension in 2013, Joe was an administrator for the Bradford Area School District. There he led the Social Studies Department and was actively involved in alternative education including after-school and summer school programs. He left public education to pursue a degree in higher education and through his interest in rural educational attainment found employment with Penn State Extension as the District Director for Washington, Greene, and Fayette Counties. Recently, he finished his doctorate in higher education management, and he and his wife welcomed their first child.

Area 7: Stan McKee

Stan holds a B.S. and a M.Ed. in Agricultural Education, both from Penn State University. Prior to joining Extension in 1998, he worked in the animal feed business as a Dairy Specialist with Purina Mills Inc. After joining Penn State Extension he was a County Extension Director and agricultural educator based in Huntingdon County, delivering programs related to dairy, agronomy, farm management, and farm safety. Since 2011 he has served as the District Director for Huntingdon, Blair, & Fulton Counties. Stan and his family live on their farm near McVeytown, in Mifflin County.

Area 8: Nina Redding

Nina has worked for Penn State Extension for 29 years. For 15 years, she served as a Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educator specializing in nutrition and food safety education. She has extensive administrative experience having served as a County Extension Director in Cumberland County and then transferred to Adams County serving four years as the County Extension Director. In 2012, she was hired as a District Extension Director serving Adams, Franklin and York Counties. Nina has been active in community and agriculture organizations and served as a 4-H leader for 30 years. She earned a B.S. in Home Economics Education from Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Master's degree in Training and Development from Penn State University. Nina and her husband Russell own the Rummel Farm which was the center of the July 3, 1863 cavalry battle near Gettysburg. They are parents of two sons Garrison and Elliot.

Area 9: Greg Gnatt

After thirty exciting years in IBM's Global Services division providing extensive technical/business knowledge and leadership in the integration, operation, delivery and financial management of complex global business and IT environments, Greg retired from IBM in 2014 to become Penn State Extension's District Director overseeing Berks and Schuylkill counties. Greg and his wife Mary Jane recently relocated from the Mechanicsburg, PA area to Lake Wynonah in Schuylkill County last summer and are newly 'empty-nesters'. They have four children all successful in their diverse careers. Greg earned his MBA in 1984 along with a BS in Horticulture ('81) from The Pennsylvania State University. He is also a certified Penn State Master Gardener. Greg looks forward to taking on the expanded role of the Area Business Operations Mgr, serving Schuylkill, Berks, Lebanon, Lancaster and Chester counties.

Area 10: Andrea Tessier

Andrea joined Penn State Extension in 2014 as the District Director for Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Prior to that she spent six years working in Montreal, Quebec where her focus was educating the adult learner through Training Development and Change Management. Andrea spent 7 years with Ohio State Extension in the area of Family and Consumer Sciences. Her belief in the mission of Extension and the importance of the delivery of unbiased information started at Ohio State and continues today. Andrea and her husband live in Lehigh County where they are raising three active daughters. Andrea is involved in her community serving on the task force for the Food Recovery and Respect working group through the local Food Policy Council as well as actively volunteering for a local refugee resettlement organization. She recently graduated from the Pennsylvania Rural-Urban Leadership (RULE) program.