

Views from VanDeWalle

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Gate to Plate- Women's Farmers & Ranchers College Program

In 2014, I had the opportunity to present at the AgChat Foundation Conference held in Austin, Texas. Along with 3 other colleagues, we shared with the other 140 people in attendance on how Nebraska Extension is able to reach a large audience through collaboration and reaching beyond our own areas of expertise and programming. At that time, through the use of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, blogs and websites, we reached nearly 3 million people!

At that conference, I had the pleasure of meeting Michele Payn, international winning author and food translator. Michele founded #AgChat and #FoodChat on Twitter, in April 2009. Tens of thousands of people from more than 20 countries participated in this highly visible conversation around food and farm issues. This community nominated Michele as one of Mashable's Top Three Twitter Users of the Year in 2009, putting agriculture alongside celebrities. Michele was a founding AgChat Foundation's board member to grow the story of farmers, ranchers and advocates in social media.

Utilizing her diverse professional experience in the agricultural, sales and not-for-profit sectors, Michele founded Cause Matters Corp., a company designed to build connections around the food plate, in 2001. Cause Matters Corp. focuses on addressing food myths, developing science communication, and connecting farm to food. In each of these core areas, Michele helps organizations clearly identify issues, understand their audience and grow solutions. Michele's goal is to help you communicate "why your cause matters" - whether you're a scientist, dietitian or in agribusiness.

Michele has earned the Certified Speaking Professional designation, awarded to less than 10% of professional speakers globally. She resides with her daughter on a small farm in central Indiana, where they enjoy Registered Holsteins, MSU Spartans and cooking. Michele's resources and website can be found at <http://causematters.com>.

I'm excited to announce that we will be having Michele Payn in Fillmore County at the next Farmers & Ranchers College program on March 14th with a program for women, titled, "Gate to Plate". This informative and light-hearted program will start with registration at 6:00 p.m., a light meal and program to follow. The venue will be Lazy Horse Vineyard & Brewery near Ohiowa, NE or at 211 Road 20, Ohiowa, NE. This program is for women involved in agriculture to learn strategies for sharing their story of agriculture to today's consumers. This program is free, however space is limited so a registration will secure your spot and help our meal count. To register, call the Fillmore County Extension Office by March 7th at 402-759-3712 or register online at go.unl.edu/farmersrancherscollege.

The *Farmers and Ranchers College* Committee consists of Fred Bruning of Bruning, Bryan Dohrman of Grafton, Sarah Miller of Carleton, Jennifer Engle of Fairmont, Ryne Norton of York, Jim Donovan of Geneva, Bryce Kassik of Geneva, Eric Kamler of Geneva, and Brandy VanDeWalle of Ohiowa.