



Rhea Bentley

FCS Extension Agent

Education

B.S. in Home Economics Education,
Tuskegee University

M.Ed. in Family Education, University of
Minnesota

Ed.D. Educational Leadership

Lagniappe:

A Little Something Extra

My career is unique because I get the best of both worlds by being an educator and administrator with all my focus on nutrition and health. I also get the opportunity to work in the communities around the state and impact lives.

One of my inspirations was my 8th Home Economics teacher. She was the best teacher I had throughout my education. She taught me so much and I wanted to be like her when I grew up with a career in Home Economics. Secondly, I have always had great mentors personally and professionally. They were my role models. They taught me the importance to fulfilling dreams and working to my full potential.

FCS Extension Agent

Rhea Bentley, Family Nutrition and Health Program Leader with South Carolina State University 1890 Research and Extension. Rhea holds a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics Education, Tuskegee University, Master of Education in Family Education, University of Minnesota, and a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Management.

My Career Path

I started my career as a Family and Consumer Sciences Teacher in 2000 while I was in graduate school. I had the opportunity to teach middle grades and high school for seven years. I had always wanted to be an Extension Agent. When I finished my undergraduate studies, I was told that I would need a master's degree in order to be an agent. After having taught for a while, I decided to explore opportunities in Extension. I was able to obtain a Family and Consumer Sciences agent position with emphasis in supervising paraprofessional staff of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). I stayed in this role for 16 years with the University of Georgia Extension working in various counties across the state of Georgia. I had wonderful opportunities to grow and hone my leadership skills. I actively participated in professional development opportunities and held leadership position in several of the professional organizations that I was a member. This gave me the opportunity to meet people and present across the USA and abroad. In 2017, I became County Extension Coordinator for Muscogee County (Columbus, GA) Extension. In this role, I also served as the Principal Investigator for the Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visitation grant. I learned so many skills in both roles. I truly believe they prepared me for where I am today with my nutrition, leadership and management. I am currently serving in the role of Family, Nutrition and Health Program Leader at South Carolina State University 1890 Research and Extension. This is the next step in my career ladder, and I am looking forward to seeing what the future holds for me at South Carolina State University.

Skills Vital to Success in Career

Communication skills are so important, verbal and written. Also, being a self-starter is a great skill to have. I have had to take initiative for advancement in my career. I haven't always been successful in every venture, but it taught me to never give up, be prepared and to always do my best. Continuing to be a life-long learner is always important. I enhance these skills and it gave me the background to be successful.

Best Advice to Someone Considering This Career

The best advice I can give someone considering this field is to learn all you can about the career and make a plan to take the steps to reach the end goal.

Recommended Educational Preparation

I recommend pursuing a degree in FCS or a related field for your area of interest. Many employers are looking for persons with advanced degrees, so if that is not your desire continue to build your skillset in the field.

How the Field Has Changed Over Time

My field has changed over time. I feel like technological advances have played a huge part. Also, the career field has grown extensively and has a broader scope. More people are interested in working with Extension from various educational backgrounds.

Projected Changes in the Future

I see the Extension field growing and people becoming more aware of the services and education that Extension can offer. Although, we may do things differently as the field changes it is still the same mission of providing research-based information through education and meeting the needs of our communities.