



Chi Epsilon Sigma - Alpha Chapter

CES is affiliated nationally with
The Extension and Research Support Staff Association 'TERSSA'

Visit our web site <http://ces.osu.edu>

The following presentation was made to the University of Kentucky Extension support staff in 1998 as they became interested in forming a chapter of Chi Epsilon Sigma. (A few of the details have been modified with current information.)

What is Chi Epsilon Sigma?

By: Lee Ann Johnson, Past President, Chi Epsilon Sigma

"An organization should motivate employees, train them, care for them and make winners of them."
Chi Epsilon Sigma works with Extension to achieve that goal.

Dorothy Rex, an Ohio State University Extension support staff emeriti was Ohio's first president of Chi Epsilon Sigma. She was instrumental in doing the background work for developing the first Extension support staff organization. Dorothy worked in a county office with an agent who was an officer in Epsilon Sigma Phi (the National Honorary Extension Fraternity for agents). She realized that a similar organization for support staff would be a benefit to their morale as well. Dorothy first approached her county chair with the idea and was given strong support and direction. She also made the appropriate contacts with the administrative staff on the state level in Ohio and received their initial approval. With this encouragement, Chi Epsilon Sigma was soon realized.

Ohio State University Extension is divided into 87 county offices, 5 district office and state program and administrative offices. Dorothy had served on various planning committees throughout the years and through those meetings, she met support staff representatives from all areas of the state. She contacted a few support staff from county, district, state and administrative levels while at the same time she kept in mind to have a good cross-section geographically.

These first individuals also received the approval from their department chair to participate in the development of CES. They met monthly in a central location for approximately six months and developed the goals and timeline. When taking their official proposal to administration, OSU Extension's director was very supportive.

A survey was then prepared and distributed to all support staff and department chairs in order to receive their input. Each time the group met, they brainstormed and as the positive responses from the survey were starting to come in, the excitement continued to blossom.

OSU Extension Administration never had any hesitation nor did they set up any roadblocks. At the same time, out of respect for their continued support, the committee realized that it was very important to always keep administration informed of the progress.

As the first committee met, their strong characteristics came forward and that's how the first officers positions fell into place. After one year, a membership drive was held.

One charter member was strongly versed in Roberts Rules of Order and with her help, the constitution and by-laws of the organization were developed.

The board of Chi Epsilon Sigma consists of:

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Membership Secretary
- Annalist
- Historian
- Administrative Liaison
- Past President
- Seven Directors (representing each of the five Extension districts, main campus, and emeriti)
- Staff Advisory Council Director

We have been fortunate in Ohio that we have a yearly conference to which all support staff are invited. This conference is usually held in October.

During the conference, time is set aside for members of CES to meet. This is when we hold our Annual Meeting and do the business of electing new officers, recognizing new members, presenting awards and recognition, and we celebrate the accomplishments of the previous year.

To join, the membership dues may be paid in a couple of different ways. According to Ohio's staff handbook, membership dues can be paid from an office budget, pending approval from that department's chair. A high percentage of our dues are approved and paid from the various office budgets in Ohio, however, we do have some members who can only belong if they pay the dues from their own pocket.

With this in mind, the officers of CES have continued to keep the dues at a minimum cost so as not to be a hardship on anyone. Ohio's dues are \$12 per year for each member. Beginning in 1999, a free lifetime membership will be offered to emeriti support staff.

CES awards two \$200 scholarships to members who apply for professional development training. These scholarships are also announced at our yearly conference. We also present awards in a newsletter/brochure contest.

Members also receive a quarterly newsletter.

Speaking for myself, being on the board of CES has been a tremendous boost to my confidence and leadership. I have been given a couple of opportunities to travel to Kentucky to assist in the formation of the Gamma Chapter. I made this presentation to them in 1998, traveled back to Kentucky in 1999 to help with the installation of their first set of officers and attended their first official support staff conference in 2000 where I was inducted as their first honorary member.

With CES, we have found that we are asked to participate in a lot more decisions that are made which affect the support staff of OSU Extension. For instance, the Presidents of the four professional Extension organizations (which represent agents, specialists and support staff) meet quarterly with the director of Extension to receive updates and to allow time for questions and general discussion.

OSU Extension also previously allocated dollars to support staff for professional development. To distribute this money, a committee of three CES officers and an administrative staff member served as the selection committee to review the applications received and select the recipients of the awards. With current budget constraints, these dollars have been temporarily discontinued.

CES officers have also served as representatives on numerous other committees (for instance, new employee orientation, retirement planning, all agricultural college conference planning, support staff mentoring, and yearly support staff conference planning committees).

Since the initial formation of this organization, it has been the desire to develop organizations in other states. That is the purpose of this presentation, to provide information and answer questions for you.

Growth of New Chapters

At this time, Arkansas, Kentucky and West Virginia also have CES chapters. Each chapter operates in a slightly different way.

Arkansas, when first formed, held yearly support staff conferences. With budget constraints, their conferences were discontinued. However, they are still so committed to Chi Epsilon Sigma and how it boosts their morale. They meet on their own and at their own expense. They have continued to grow, in spite of their hardships and that shows us true commitment.

Kentucky has a yearly support staff conference. Their chapter is responsible for the planning of their conference and is attended by CES members only.

West Virginia's chapter was installed in 2001, and they have hit the ground running.

I hope this information provides some details about the basic structure of our organization and how we continue to grow. If you would like to have additional information or assistance in forming a chapter in your state, do not hesitate to contact any of the officers listed on our website.

Using this information as a starting point, an article was published in the October 1999 Issue of the Journal of Extension Tools of the Trade section about Chi Epsilon Sigma. It is available for your review at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/1999october/tt3.php>