

An Administrative Assistants Life in a Very Small County

Hi, my name is Oma Fleming --- I began working for Dolores County Extension office when I graduated from high school, as an on-job training program for the summer. I went to Ft. Lewis College for a year, then returned to work in the Extension Office and helped on the family farm, also washing dishes in a local restaurant. One small problem was I forgot to go back to college.

I have remained with the Dolores County Extension office for 33 years as a part time Administrative Assistant. I also was given the pleasure of becoming the Manager for the Weed District part time. So now I am working full time but 2 part time jobs in the same office, and I still maintained my work in the restaurant for my

Working in a small County, I have also helped in the Nurse's Office with numerous jobs, including holding the Children for shots, and helping with the two day flu shot clinic.

I have also been called to help in the Commissioner's Office numerous times, helping with bills, minutes and meetings. 4 years ago, I was once again called upon to learn the payroll in two months so that I could do this task while the HR person was on maternity leave. And let me assure you, it was something of challenge, but hey, I was talking about my paycheck along with 72 others, I conquered with a few trials and errors.

During this time, I have been thru 6 county Agents, 5 regional directors, 5 State Directors and I have been without a director/agent for roughly 10 of those years. I have seen 14 county commissioners, 5 Sheriffs' and 3 Coroners come and go,

I share my office with the coroner so if you need a body bag, let me know. I have also shared my office with the Drivers License, GIS and workforce, among others.

I was privileged to work with Dan Fernandez for many of those years and we always had an open communication. We knew what was going on with each other, when we were going to be gone, what project we were tackling, where or who needed something from the office.

During this time, the County Commissioner's installed an alarm system throughout our Courthouse, referred to as the panic button. They had only allotted for so many and was short one alarm. So our County Commissioner (in his booming voice) came to Dan and let him know that our office would not be receiving an alarm.

His statement to Dan was **"if they get by your Secretary, you are dead anyway"**. Hmm, I did not realize I was that mean, nor did I ask Dan if that made him feel safe???

Most importantly to me in the office is that I always get a person's name, address or phone number, and getting back to a client, in a timely manner. If the agent is out of the office, and someone leaves a message, I always call them back and let them know the agent is out and see if I can help or when the agent will return a call.

Years' ago, we started a program with student workers, and that was a difficult step for me. I had been the only one in the office and was not sure what to do with them. It took baby steps, but I came to rely on them heavily and would never have been able to handle all of this without them. I now supervisor 4 employees, and last year I was made the Fair Board Manager, with this change the Commissioners are going to let me budget to have a full-time part time person come on board, as the student training program is phasing out of our school system.

I have also worked with an agent where we barely said good morning and good evening to each other, but I still maintained my open communication as best as possible. If someone had come in or had an question, I made sure he knew the situation and what I helped the person with. And if he wanted to follow up with it, I made sure he had the person's name and phone number.

~~Our office has also been called upon by the commissioners and served in the capacity of County Manager. I learned that when you are doing a remodeling project in the basement of the Courthouse and my boss Dan, the architect, and 3 County Commissioners are all unavailable at Christmas and the contractors want to charge us \$25,000 to put the job on hold for 3 days — you can give them permission to knock a whole wall out of the county courthouse and continue work. I was pretty sure this time I would be fired, but when everyone returned it was like good call.~~

That communication has carried over with my County Commissioner's. I could and did call on them numerous times letting them know if I had a problem or asking for their advice. I have also always relied on my neighboring County Agent's Jan and Bob, among others, and called them with lots and lots and lots of questions, problems, etc. I also learned how to call every specialist and professor on campus to get an answer to my questions. I assured my clients I would get them an answer, and somehow I did.

I was without a agent when it came time to sign the 4-H club up for chartering, I did all the paper work, had my County Commissioners look it over, called CJ on who should sign all the papers and submitted it.

I now have a brand new Agent Gus, who is still in-training and I think he has heard about the alarm system because he looks scared a lot. But I promptly dumped the 4-H chartering in his lap and have not offered to help it with it since. I do help with everything else, just not the chartering.

Having a county agent for a supervisor, being my own boss, answering to 2 boards, 3 county commissioners as a part time-full time job, is not the simplest task. I also still work another part time job, but traded the restaurant in for a

liquor store, the beer is closer. I have not always made the right decision, or kept all my drawings inside the lines, I have relied on my gut instinct for most of my decisions, stumbled many times, took care of the matters that needing tending to and did this with my best knowledge or capability and in a timely matter.

But I feel that Communication with my supervisor's is what has made all of this work so well all these years.

Even tho it is probably more like I run amuck without supervision most of the time, doing my best AND I STILL WORK THERE!!!!

My motto is never regret anything that has happened in your life. It cannot be changed, undone, or forgotten so take it as a lesson learned and move on.