



12/01/09

Dear Friends of ARC:

I hope this note finds you doing well and enjoying success in this interesting year.

I'm writing to provide an update on Ag Relations Council – to recap our YTD accomplishments and share our plans and vision for the coming year. Think of this as an (admittedly informal) ARC Annual Report.

When I was elected ARC president last fall, the group was struggling and I talked honestly with all of you about that. Membership numbers were way down, we were just bringing a new professional management firm aboard and the list of things that needed to be done was long indeed. We also were facing the prospects of executing ARC's annual meeting in March, against the backdrop of one of the most severe economic contractions any of us has ever seen.

I'm very happy to report that ARC has not only survived in 2009, it is thriving. Some key accomplishments:

- The ARC board hired Den Gardner of Gardner & Gardner to manage the organization, and return ARC to professional oversight for the first time in nearly a decade. It was one of the smartest things we ever did. Our financial house is in order, we pulled off a profitable annual meeting under Den's leadership and membership is thriving.
- Speaking of our annual meeting, we successfully staged a meeting in March in New Orleans, securing a paid attendance of about 20 people and delivering an agenda and hands-on learning unmatched by any professional meeting I've attended in recent years. Among the many other reasons to meet in that great city, we couldn't resist the biggest similarity between ARC and NOLA: We're both proving to be the ultimate comeback kids.
- Late last year, the ARC board set a 2009 membership goal of 40. That may sound modest, but at a time when our formal membership role was in the low teens, a goal of 40 was ambitious. (I hasten to add that we have many friends and supporters who are not members.) I'm happy to report that we not only hit that goal before the first half of the year was complete, but are now edging toward a membership of 45. During our recent ARC board call, we set our revised membership goal at 60 by the end of 2010. I have no doubt that we'll get there, and then continue to set the bar higher.
- We entered the world of social media via new ARC pages on both Facebook and LinkedIn. These pages have provided an important conduit to communicate with members and prospects. At this writing, our LinkedIn group has 66 members and the Facebook group has 25 members. Special thanks to board member Katana Ewbank of AlphaScouts for leading ARC into the social media waters.
- At this year's Ag Media Summit, ARC partnered with the AMS board to stage our first-ever silent auction. The event was a huge success – both financially and in terms of raising ARC's visibility. We raised in excess of \$2,700, which will be divided equally between ARC and AMS. All of the credit goes to tireless ARC supporter Amy McDonald, of McDonald Marketing Communications, who proposed the auction idea and almost single-handedly made it happen. Based on the

success of this year's event, we will stage this annually at AMS and I'm confident we'll bring in even more dollars for the future. Many thanks to Amy and our friends at AMS for making this happen.

Remember that to-do list I mentioned earlier? It still exists and while the number of action items is more than I had hoped for by now, I can assure you that we have movement on a number of key initiatives for ARC. Some updates:

- We've produced our first *ARCLight newsletter*, and sent out in November. We're planning a follow-up issue in the first quarter of 2010, and hope to formally make this a quarterly newsletter after that.
- Work is progressing on a new ARC Web site – one that will offer fresh content and enhanced opportunities for members to interact. Our goal is to launch the site by the first quarter of next year.
- We will be announcing the new Golden ARC Award program at the meeting in Memphis and encourage those with ideas to send them to Bob Giblin at [robert.giblin@intervet.com](mailto:robert.giblin@intervet.com) or 920-397-6408. As many of you know, this organization has a rich awards heritage, anchored by the Golden ARC Award, still known and revered even several years after the last one was given.

Finally, I'd ask you to mark your calendars for **Feb. 18-20, 2010** – the date of ARC's next annual meeting in Memphis. With leadership from board members Carroll Merry of Countryside Marketing and Janice Person of Monsanto, the ARC board is working on an agenda that will be anchored by professional development, hands-on learning and get-out-of-the-meeting-room tours. The agenda is posted on ARC's website.

For those of you who joined ARC in 2009, I pass along my sincere thanks and ask for your continued help in taking ARC to the next level.

For those of you considering membership in ARC, I invite you to join the *only* group dedicated to serving agricultural PR professionals.

And for those of you who've been with ARC all along, I reserve my biggest thank-you ... for hanging in, for cajoling, for suggesting, for believing. ARC is on the road back to greatness, and we could not have done so without your support.

As always, let me know your thoughts and, especially, your suggestions for how ARC can be better. You can reach me at (630) 955-6656 or by e-mail at [djohnson@rkconnect.com](mailto:djohnson@rkconnect.com). Or, you can contact Barb Ulschmid or Den Gardner with Gardner & Gardner Communications at 952-758-5811 or [arc@gardnerandgardnercommunications.com](mailto:arc@gardnerandgardnercommunications.com).

Thanks and best wishes for the rest of 2009.



Deron L. Johnson  
President, Ag Relations Council