

PRESIDENT’S LETTER

These continue to be uncertain times as the nation and world faces the effects of the pandemic, and we’ll continue to face challenges for who knows how long. I recognize the stressors and tensions experienced, as we navigate these challenges and changes, during this unprecedented time in history. Despite this uncertainty, let’s take a few minutes to ‘Keep on the Sunny Side’ (this Appalachian gospel song happens to be one of my many favorites). Your Alpha Sigma Chapter of ESP continues to be a robust and vibrant organization as it continues to be your key to professional excellence. Awards, scholarships, continuing education, and leadership are a few of the opportunities ESP affords.



Another ‘On the Sunny Side’ occurrence was the National ESP Virtual Conference with excellent Keynote and Capstone speakers, great breakout sessions, and opportunities to network with colleagues from across the Nation. Once again some congratulations and thanks are in order: Congratulations to Peggy Compton as the new National ESP President! It was a highlight for me, as I attended the National ESP Virtual Conference, to witness Peggy being sworn in and being handed the gavel, virtually, to be our leader at the National level. Please read her inspiring Presidential Address in this newsletter. Thanks to Kandi O’Neil for serving along with myself as a voting delegate at the National Conference.

Thanks to the 2020 Virtual ESP Picnic organizers, Cindy Sarkady, Linda Kustka, Jim Barthel, and Paul Roback. I hope you will be able to attend the virtual picnic. It will be good to see you, virtually, and to hear the great things that happen because of ESP. Please be sure to look for the important deadlines in this newsletter: awards applications, grant applications and 2021 dues.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Schilling

Mary Ann Schilling



IN THIS ISSUE

WI ESP President’s Letter	1
WI ESP President-Elect.....	2
Retiree Committee	2-3
Awards Committee.....	4
Membership Committee.....	5
Grants Committee	6
ESP National Presidential Address....	7-8
In Memoriam	9-10
Benefits Review.....	10-12
2020-21 ESP Board of Directors.....	13



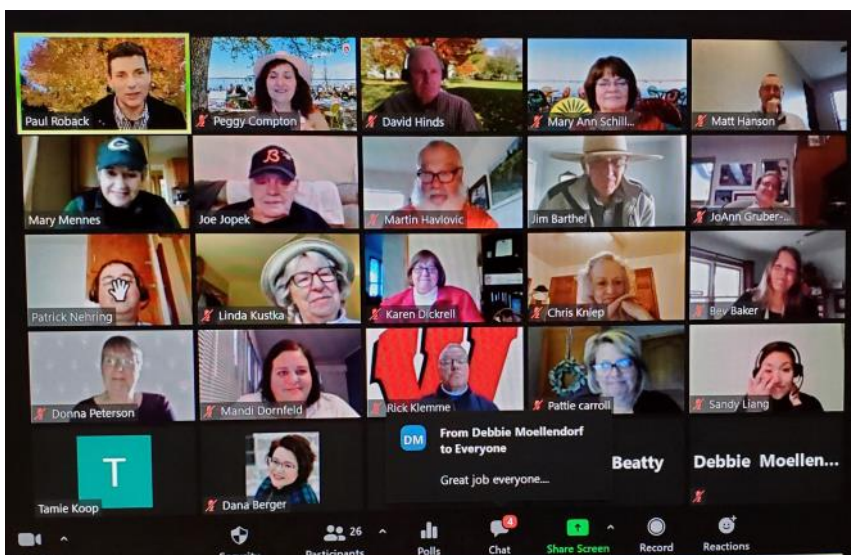
WISCONSIN ESP PRESIDENT-ELECT

Paul Roback



Although we couldn't meet in-person for the annual ESP Picnic, 31 ESP members attended a virtual picnic on October 26th using Zoom. About half the participants were current employees and the other half were retirees. To create a festive atmosphere, participants were encouraged to wear picnic attire and to change their Zoom background to an outside or Fall setting. In keeping with picnic tradition, the event started with John Wedberg calling the event together with the ringing of the cowbell.

The program provided updates on current ESP membership and accomplishments this past year, an overview of the awards program and grant application process, reports from three recent grant recipients, an endowment update, and a presentation of a Challenge Grant concept to increase donations to the endowment fund. ESP National President Peggy Compton was the featured presenter and provided an overview of the National ESP organization. The program ended with a video presentation of the Extension Workers Creed, which was developed by Texas A&M University and is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKdaSgGm5yE>



www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKdaSgGm5yE

Feedback from the virtual picnic has been very positive! Participants appreciated an opportunity to connect with each other without having to travel to Madison. The Zoom Chat feature was very active throughout the picnic as participants re-connected with others, asked questions, and shared a new thing that they have started or appreciated since the pandemic started. The ESP Board would like to thank the virtual picnic planning committee, which included Jim Barthel, Chris Kniep, Linda Kustka, Paul Roback, and Cindy Sarkady.

RETIREE COMMITTEE

Paul Roback, Committee Chair

The Retiree Committee continues to serve as your link between Extension and retirement. Members of the Retiree Committee include Jim Barthel, Ginny Hall, Christine Kniep, Linda Kustka, Mary Kaye Merwin, and Paul Roback. Recently, Ginny Hall had an opportunity to interview Ellen Fitzsimmons. Most of the information below is directly from Ellen; Ginny's comments are in brackets. To make it easier in this time of the pandemic Ginny sent eight questions to Ellen by way of Mary Kaye Merwin's computer. Ellen spends most of her time in Texas but was in Madison when Ginny originally talked with her.



RETIREE HIGHLIGHT: ELLEN FITZSIMMONS

1. What was your role(s) with UW-Extension? "County Extension Agent was the title at the time I started, at least that is what I recall." [Actually it was Extension Home Economist. I worked with



RETIREE COMMITTEE (CONTINUED INTERVIEW OF ELLEN FITZSIMMONS)

Paul Roback, Committee Chair

(1.) Ellen in Walworth County. She has responsibility for foods and nutrition programming and work with the low income clientele.] “I was a state specialist, state program leader, associate dean and interim vice-chancellor.”

2. What did you value about your career in Extension? “I believed, and still believe, that our work was a public benefit to people in Wisconsin and beyond. People that worked in UWEX were committed to their work, hardworking and a joy with whom to work.”

3. What advice do you have for current UW staff? “Hang in there. I was fortunate to work in Extension at a time when there was limited organizational change so we could focus on programming and not figuring out what was going to happen next. I started in 1971, not long after Extension was established as a separate institution so always felt we had the best organizational structure in the country. Now the organization seems to have come full circle.”

4. How did you transition into retirement? “For the last few years before retirement, I had a file drawer I threw recipes into. When I retired I decided the time had come to do something with them. I am gluten and dairy intolerant so spent a few hours most days working on a cookbook. Once it was finished, I did some small book events to sell the books. I loved writing the book and hated selling the books! In retrospect, having a small project gave me some structure that first year. Also, my daughters had 6 children in four years soon after I retired (two sets of twins) so I spent a lot of time changing diapers in Texas and the Netherlands.”

5. How have you contributed to UWEX and/or the community since retirement? We moved to Texas about ten years ago and live just south of downtown Dallas in a 100-year-old bungalow in a neighborhood that is building back from several generations of neglect. I am on the board for a Friends of the Parks group and a Friends of the Library group. I pull a lot of weeds in our neighborhood parks and serve as the Volunteer Coordinator trying to get business and community groups involved in improving the parks. Parks and libraries are underfunded in our neighborhood and volunteers make a huge difference. I work with a number of Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists. Texas AgriLife (the extension program here) is not very visible in southern Dallas.”

6. How do you connect with former colleagues and/or UWEX in retirement? “We try to get back to Wisconsin yearly and see a few folks and I keep in touch with some by email.”

7. How do you identify and/or tap into a passion during retirement? “When we first moved to Dallas, we lived in a condo that overlooked a park. Our neighborhood had many apartment buildings so the park served as the green space for the families and young people that lived in the area. It was always busy. I sometimes saw volunteers working in the gardens and decided I wanted to help out. On the personal travel side, one of our children lives in Europe so we have made many trips to Europe with our children and grandchildren.”

8. Do you have any advice to those who are about to retire? People who work in Extension are smart and have many interests so will not have any trouble transitioning into retirement. Volunteer work is terrific because you can make a real contribution but also control your schedule.” [As long as you are able to pronounce the word – NO.] “Stay healthy so you can enjoy many good years.”



AWARDS COMMITTEE

Donna Peterson, Committee Chair



Call for Award Nominations

Due by February 1st

Do you know an Extension colleague or retiree who deserves to be recognized for their contributions to the mission of Extension? Nominate a worthy candidate for one of the Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) awards or work with your colleague to self-nominate. Awards are available from the Wisconsin Chapter of ESP with the opportunity of National ESP awards consideration.

Service Awards recognize ESP members for their contributions to Extension:

Early-Career Service (Chapter, National)

Eligible in first 10 years of Extension career.

Mid-Career Service (Chapter, National)

Eligible with over 10 years and less than 20 years of service to Extension.

Distinguished Service (Chapter, National)

Eligible with over 20 years of service to Extension.

Continued Excellence (Chapter, National)

Eligible 5 years after receiving Distinguished Service award.

Ruby Distinguished Service (National)

Most prestigious award recognizing outstanding thinking, performance and leadership in Extension.

International Service (Chapter, National)

Recognizes development and expansion of an Extension program in another country or countries.

Retiree Service Award (Chapter)

Recognize an ESP member who continues to contribute to the mission of Extension following retirement.

Leadership Awards recognize ESP members for their contributions in leading Extension:

Visionary Leadership (Chapter, National)

Recognizes accomplishments that have led Extension forward in new directions.

Administrative Leadership (Chapter, National)

Recognizes accomplishments in administrative leadership for 10 years or more.

Distinguished Team Award (Chapter, National)

Recognizes outstanding efforts of Extension staff teams (two or more individuals).

Diversity Awards (Chapter, National)

Two awards one recognizes outstanding individual and the other team accomplishments in programming that reaches audiences in our diverse and multicultural society.

Non-ESP Member Awards:

Meritorious Support Service Award (Chapter)

Nominate a support staff person who demonstrates excellence in supporting Extension programming. This person does not need to be an ESP member.

Friend of Extension (Chapter, National)

Recognizes a non-Extension (lay) person, business or organization for their outstanding support and personal involvement in Extension efforts.

Nominations for all of these awards are due by February 1st. More information and nomination materials can be found at <https://wiesp.org/committees/awards/>



MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Libby Huber, Committee Chair



Many of you have already received an email from the National ESP office asking to renew your membership. If you haven't received this email and are a current member, please update your email address on the National ESP website (<https://epsilonsigmaphi.wildapricot.org/>). To do this you will need to login as you have before, this might be your old UWEX email. Once logged in click on your name in the upper right hand corner. A page with "My profile" should come up. Under that heading there will be a button labeled "Edit profile." Click on that and you will be able to update your information. On the profile page you will also see your membership invoice. You can pay using a credit card or sending a check to the national office.

If your membership is a couple years old or you forgot your password you will need to email the National ESP Office at espoffice@espnational.org to start the membership renewal process.

If you want to become a member, go to this website and follow the steps: <https://epsilonsigmaphi.wildapricot.org/New-Member-Application>

Other items you can find on the National ESP website include: national grant opportunities, ESP sponsored event registration, on line store, and much more.

So many of you might be asking yourself, budgets are tight so why should I join ESP? Well, membership to ESP is open to all Extension personnel including county based staff, university based specialists, administration, and retirees. This allows for networking across program areas from colleagues across the state and even the country.

Other benefits of ESP membership include:

- Scholarships for individual professional development opportunities including Advanced Degrees
 - In addition to the chapter scholarships there are over \$6,000 available from National ESP for professional development or to attend an ESP or JCEP national conferences
- Chapter and national recognition programs for member individuals and teams
 - Several of our colleagues have been recognized on the chapter and national level for the work being done in our counties and state
- Chapter and national leadership opportunities
 - If you are interested in holding a leadership position there are many opportunities locally as well as on the national level to chair a committee or become a board member
- Network of Extension professionals united across disciplines and program areas
 - Opportunities such as joining an affinity group to develop programming around a certain topic or issue
- And many others such as international opportunities and involvement in public issues just to name a few.



GRANTS COMMITTEE

Pattie Carroll & Mandi Dornfeld, Committee Co-Chairs



Thank you so much for the professional development support with tuition reimbursement. I used the funding to help with tuition expenses for an online certificate to qualify me for an Elementary Education teaching license in Wisconsin, from the American Board Certification of Teaching Excellence.

The coursework I have completed includes foundational knowledge about classroom management, assessment, instructional design, effective instructional delivery and multiple subjects in Elementary Education. The skills and strategies that I have learned, specifically classroom management, I have already put into practice while programming with the youth in Price County this summer. Looking forward to fall programming, I am using tools that I have learned for effective instructional delivery while altering my programming to either virtual or modifying in person programming to meet strict COVID 29 guidelines.

I am so grateful for ESP's support in helping me complete this online certification. When I began the course, I was able to use the knowledge in my work with Extension right away. I am excited to use more of what I have learned to assist in my youth and parenting programming in the future.

Libby Huber, 2020 ESP Professional Development Grant Recipient

ESP National Conference 2020 attendee summary

Moving beyond outputs to demonstrate IMPACT -

This concurrent session was a great reminder - what are outputs, outcomes and impact. How are they different? How can we tell this story? How can we tell our story? Do we understand the pieces of an impact statement? They shared the use of infographics as a way to tell our story. By using infographics you move from telling the story to showing the story. Drawing out what you had in mind can be very helpful. As a visual person this made sense. The presentation shared seven infographics best practices. I really feel you could use these best practices for preparing more than just infographics. I will use some of those seven as I prepare a presentation for our Extension Committee.

USA/China Small and Family Farms Blended Learning and Teaching Exchange

This was another concurrent session that I attended. This exchange started in March 2007. It was great to see the vegetables that were grown. I also found it interesting that a simple yet effective software - Articulate Storyline software was used for this project. This software allows multiple languages to be incorporated into a single learning module driving the innovation and adoption of learning. Very interesting project/exchange.

Opening welcome by Chris Watkins, Cornell University I found it calming and great knowing that "we are all in this together". One of the examples that he gave was the Kodak industry that we once in Rochester. We should never take things for granted. We need to look for the opportunities ahead of ourselves. Some of the changes that we are seeing now will be permanent. Virtual has given us a greater reach. Think about the power and the reach of virtual. Nutrition and 4-H will find this to be more of a challenge as to how they will do their work because of the high touch programs they have been in the past. Who are our new audiences? How are we reaching them with diversity, inclusion and equity in mind.

Sonny Ramaswamy - Keynote Speaker - Shared his history and experience in working with and for Land Grant Universities here in America. He has an appreciation for the Land Grant Universities. Sonny then tapped into Extension's DNA moving to the Smith Lever Act of 1914. This presentation, I felt, was a lesson in the history of Extension nationwide. Covering the different levels of partnerships when Extension started Federal + State + Local/County.

These are highlights of the conference. I appreciate that it was virtual so that I could attend at a much lower cost than having to be there in person.

Donna Peterson, 2020 ESP Professional Development Grant Recipient



ESP NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Peggy Compton



Addressing ESP members on Thursday, October 8, 2020, during the Annual National Conference
Immediately following installation as ESP's National President

Thank you, Mike [Mike Knutz, ESP Past-President], for your superb leadership this past year, for your friendship over many years and for the mentoring I know you will provide in the upcoming year. I would also like to my fellow ESP members for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your National President in the upcoming year.

Eight years ago when I accepted the gavel as the newly installed President of the Wisconsin Alpha Sigma Chapter of ESP, I somewhat in jest – but with a little bit of truth – quipped that with the fine leadership in whose footsteps I was following, my goal was to “not screw anything up” that they had accomplished.

And now as I become the President of our **National** Association, I am again, most certainly following in the footsteps of some incredible leaders – Mike, Mark, Beth, Kathy, Patricia, Ann, Jeff...just to name a few of the most recent. While their accomplishments are many and they have steered the ship in the right direction, it is most definitely not a time to sit back and just “try not to screw anything up.” Rather, it is a time to be bold! To scrutinize our association, its purpose, and how well we are accomplishing that purpose.

The constitution of the Epsilon Sigma Phi National Honorary Extension Fraternity states in the 1930 Articles of Incorporation, the organization's purpose: “recognizing excellence in the Extension community; providing opportunity for networking, fellowship, and collaborative efforts; fostering leadership development through mentoring Extension professionals in the philosophy and professional practice of Extension education; and facilitating professional development.”

A member survey nearly 90 years later in 2019 identified similar priorities for the National Board's Strategic Action Plan, including: Increasing professional development and leadership opportunities, engaging members through networking and communication, and strengthening the extension system.



But even with a mostly unchanged purpose, are we called to “think anew and act anew” to echo the Abraham Lincoln quote shared by Sonny Ramaswamy in his keynote address Tuesday? Although we are holding our own in member numbers, we are always looking to maintain and grow our membership. Can we employ new ways of thinking and acting around membership guidelines, member recruitment and



ESP NATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS (CONTINUED)

Peggy Compton

retention, and or marketing that will help us better meet our purpose?

Yesterday Dr. Wintersteen described a “face of extension” still present in the time of the pandemic – but with a reinvention of delivery methods to match the changing needs of our communities.” In the same way, ESP is still present in this time of uncertainty and change. Do we need to reinvent ourselves to continue to meet the changing needs of ESP members and the Extension Profession?” Can we provide more member opportunities for engagement and involvement through an updated committee structure, additional affinity groups, or enhanced processes nationally and in our chapters? Can we provide professional development, recognition and networking opportunities in new and innovative ways? Perhaps this virtual conference format is just the beginning of what is possible if we think and act anew.

As Dr. Wintersteen so eloquently stated yesterday, the face of extension is looking back at you from the mirror. Remember, you are also seeing the face of ESP looking back from the mirror. Share your enthusiasm for ESP with others in your office, your county or district, and your state. It will take all of us working together to increase membership, to continue to build our endowment funds, to attract a diversity of faces to our association and to serve all of our members.

My ESP membership has provided me the great pleasure of knowing some of the icons of Wisconsin Extension and ESP, including, Dr. Gale VandeBerg, former University of Wisconsin Assistant Chancellor and Director of the Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Service. Gale was the 1982 Ruby Award Recipient and 1984-85 ESP National President. Gale celebrated his 100th birthday last week and I would like to close with this quote from his 1982 Ruby Lecture.

“Perhaps the most significant quality of this profession which brings about the family-like response among us is that it generates in each of us such a deep commitment to people--to helping people to develop and to make decisions--decisions which result in people's personal and financial well-being--decisions which result in positive family relationships and in positive community environments and community economic well-being. It is that commitment which causes our profession to become for us a way of life rather than a way of making a living. And that is why we take such pride in this profession and professional family fraternity. It can and will be what we individually and collectively want it to be as an enhancement to our profession and its many facets.”

I look forward to the upcoming year as we work together to make ESP “what we want it to be as an enhancement to our profession.”



Happy 100th birthday to Dr. Gale VandeBerg on November 10th!

Check out this wonderful article recently published in the Wisconsin State Journal about Gale’s 100th birthday: https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/know-your-madisonian-retired-uw-professor-plans-socially-distanced-100th-birthday-party/article_9c99aae6-08fe-527a-9a99-e2b927814708.html



IN MEMORIAM

JoAnn Gruber-Hagen, Volunteer



IN MEMORIAM -- We are saddened to share that we received information of losing 4 friends and colleagues since our last newsletter.

Alfred Lawrence Finger, age 96, of Janesville, Wis., passed away on January 11, 2020. He grew up on the family farm and following high school, he attended UW-Madison graduating with a Bachelor's and Master's Degrees. He joined the home farm for several years before becoming the first 4-H agent in Vernon County. He became 4-H agent for Rock County in 1956 and held various Extension positions until his retirement in 1987. He was active in numerous Extension activities throughout Wisconsin during his tenure with the State and was an Emeritus Associate Professor. He served as secretary of the Rock County 4-H Fair for 25 years. Following retirement, he was active in Wisconsin tourism and was a security guard at Camp Randall Stadium and the Kohl Center. He was also an active golfer, bowler and cross-country skier, remaining active during most of his entire life and enjoyed traveling.

Chère Campbell Gibson passed away on August 25, 2020. She was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada and moved to Montréal, Québec, Canada, in 1948. Chère attended MacDonald College of McGill University, Montréal, Québec, graduating with a B.Sc. in 1966. She worked as a Dietitian for several years until she joined the faculty at Kemptville College of Agricultural Technology, in Kemptville, Ontario, Canada where she taught basic nutrition, diet therapy and food service management. In 1971 she enrolled in the University of Wisconsin-Madison and earned her Ph.D. in Adult Education in 1974. Her next professional stop was joining the faculty at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Upon returning to Wisconsin, Chère joined UW System Administration as an academic planner. In 1984 she joined the faculty of the UW-Madison Department of Continuing and Vocational Education and later became a Professor in the School of Human Ecology and served in the Family Living Program Area in Wisconsin-Extension. She and husband Professor Terry Gibson gave leadership to the first Annual Conference on Distance Teaching and Learning in 1985, now a premier national distance learning conference for educators. She was inducted into the United States Distance Learning USDLA Hall of Fame 2003 and in 2011 she was recognized for her work in Adult Education when she was inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame. Chère retired in 2004 but remained active with husband Terry in publishing books and articles.

Pauline L. (Poehler) Lueders died on August 28th, 2020 in Waupaca. After the WWII ended in 1945, Pauline enrolled at UW-Madison along with her brother Henry. She earned her Bachelor's degree in Home Economics in 1948. Pauline worked professionally as a home economist during the 1950s and 1960s for University of Wisconsin Extension in Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties, working with women and 4-H families. She continued her 4-H work after marriage starting a 4-H club in India for missionary children. She coordinated projects where she taught cooking, sewing and public speaking. After returning to the US, she was a project leader in Phillips, Wisconsin for cooking and sewing. She was an active 4-H leader for a group in Waupaca that her children were involved in. Pauline travelled extensively as a young woman. Being a world traveler and college graduate, she was a progressive woman for the time. Few women doing those things back then.

Richard Lee LaCroix, age 75, passed away peacefully at his home August 31, 2020, due to kidney and heart failure. Richard was an accomplished high school and played as offensive right guard for



IN MEMORIAM (CONTINUED)

JoAnn Gruber-Hagen, Volunteer

the UW Badgers, lettering 1964-66. Richard earned his BS degree in Dairy Science and a MS degree in Soil Science, at UW-Madison, graduating with scholastic honors. Richard's first position was a management role with UW-Extension at Ashland and Spooner Agricultural Research Stations. He went on to serve in Calumet and Fond du Lac counties as a Dairy Agent. Following these roles, he served at AMPI as regional manager supervising milk procurement. With the buy-out of AMPI, he joined the feed industry working in management and as a Dairy Specialist for GROWMARK, Land O' Lakes and Kent Feeds. With the consolidation of the feed industry, he went to work for Cooperative Resources International as Special Projects Manager, and later with AgSource Cooperative as VP of Product Services and Development. He continued part-time work in retirement as Contract Agricultural Specialist working as a consultant for American Transmission Company. Service was important to Richard and he was involved in a number of associations and boards at the state and local levels.

Help Us Recognize Colleagues Who Have Passed On

As a service to our ESP membership, we try to share information of deaths of colleagues. You can help if you would forward information you become aware of to JoAnn Gruber-Hagen. She will prepare announcements for ESP newsletters as well as for ESP gatherings. If you have an ESP event coming up and would like to be able to recognize colleagues who have passed, please contact JoAnn and she will be sure you have the most recent information. You can contact JoAnn at 7210 Timberwood Drive, Madison, WI 53719 or joann.gruberhagen@gmail.com.

BENEFITS REVIEW

Brian Holmes

The State of Wisconsin Investment Board Core Trust Fund **Year-to-Date return** for the month ending September 30 was 4.7% while its benchmark was 4.5%. The Variable Trust Fund Year-to-Date return for the month was 1.8% and its benchmark was 2.2%. In the future, the Year-to-Date results will be the values published on the SWIB and ETF web sites.

The State of Wisconsin Investment Board (SWIB) Board of Trustees met on October 20, 2020. They heard a presentation by Christopher Levell of NEPC, LLC during which he discussed Asset Allocation Recommendations (pages 8-51). If interested in seeing the presentation materials click [here](#).

The stock market returns for the month as of October 30 are:

Dow Jones Industrial Average	- 7.1 %
S & P 500	+ 1.2 %
NASDAQ	+21.6 %

The Conference Board Leading Economic Index® (LEI) for the U.S. increased 0.7 percent in September to 107.2 (2016 = 100), following a 1.4 percent increase in August and a 2.0 percent increase in July.

"The US LEI increased in September, driven primarily by declining unemployment claims and rising housing permits. However, the decelerating pace of improvement suggests the US economy could be losing momentum heading into the final quarter of 2020," said Ataman Ozyildirim, Senior Director of Economic Research at The Conference Board. "The US economy is projected to expand in Q4, but at a substantially slower rate of 1.5 percent (annual rate) according to The



BENEFITS REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Brian Holmes

Conference Board's GDP forecast. Furthermore, downside risks to the recovery may be increasing amid rising new cases of COVID-19 and continued labor market weakness."

Building permits, an indicator of future housing starts, increased to an annualized pace of 1.553 million. Existing home sales hit 6.54 million, higher than anticipated. Home sales have been a surprising bright spot in 2020. More homes have been sold in the first nine months of 2020 than in all of 2019, according to a Realtor.com economist. New home sales hit an annualized pace of 1.011 million in August, the highest pace since 2006. New home supply is only 3.3 months at the current sales pace, about half the inventory level that is considered normal. This will put upward pressure on prices for the foreseeable future, as well as drive new construction. The National Association of Home Builders' said its homebuilder confidence index hit a new all-time high. It is clear why homebuilders are the most optimistic since the confidence index began in the 1990s.

Flash manufacturing and service PMIs show the economy strengthened in October. The service PMI saw a jump from 54.6 to 56.0. Continuing claims continued their weekly decline of 1 million and hit 8.37 million for the week ending October 10th.

Employment obviously remains an issue, with initial claims above 800,000. Prior to the pandemic, jobless claims were at all-time lows near 200,000 weekly. Long-term unemployment is falling, and the unemployment rate is falling as more people go back to work, but unemployment remains high in states relying on tourism or having stricter lockdown rules.

While concerns over the unemployment rate remain, the pace at which private-sector jobs have been added is quite impressive. Nearly half of all private-sector jobs that were either temporarily eliminated or furloughed since the pandemic have been added back. The unemployment rate of 7.9 percent reported for September should be viewed within the context of the relatively quick rate at which jobs have rebounded since the peak of unemployment in the pandemic. An additional 661,000 jobs in the private sector were added for September alone. When compared with the unemployment rate of 10.2 percent re-reported in July, the job growth posted through the end of September is very encouraging.

Whoever is in charge will take on an enormous challenge: The US economy is still down nearly 11 million jobs from before the pandemic. JPMorgan doesn't see a full jobs recovery until 2022. The average hourly wage increased 0.1 percent in September, which represents another month of increases after a bump of 0.3 percent in August. Retail sales were up 0.6 percent from the beginning of August and have increased by 2.6 percent over the past year. The passage of a large stimulus relief bill (if it happens) could also have a dramatic effect on retail sales in the coming months and may drive retail spending to pre-March highs.

Personal income grew 0.9 percent in September, better than the 0.5 percent forecast. Consumer spending rose 1.4 percent, beating the 1.1 percent estimate. Core inflation was in line with analyst expectations at 0.2 percent. The savings rate also remained elevated at 14.3 percent, about double what it was before the pandemic hit. This is positive for future growth because as the economy reopens, consumers will spend down savings in future months, creating a double-boost to consumer spending going forward.



BENEFITS REVIEW (CONTINUED)

Brian Holmes

Despite estimates that retail spending would rise 0.8 percent from August to September, the increase in consumer spending came in at an impressive 1.9 percent. This represented the fifth month in a row of spending increases for the retail sector. Clothing companies experienced the most drastic increase in consumer spending, with a bump of 11 percent in the last month. Department stores also posted a 9.7 percent increase in consumer spending.

The University of Michigan released October's preliminary consumer sentiment reading with an unexpectedly high rating of 81.2. This was significantly higher than the 80.5 that was expected by economists. In general, a positive consumer outlook on the economy for the upcoming year seems to have offset any consumer concerns over the unemployment rate and lingering coronavirus complications.

Consumer confidence was much stronger than was forecast in September. Economists expected optimism would slow with the impact of stimulus fading, but instead, confidence hit a new pandemic high. Current sentiment climbed nearly 13 points to 98.5 last month, while future expectations jumped more than 17 points to a 104 reading. This indicates the economic recovery will accelerate if coronavirus cases are stable or decline.

Even though unemployment remains high, consumers are becoming more optimistic about opening the economy back up. The Conference Board shocked forecasters in September when it reported its consumer confidence index hit 101.8, way up from the prior month's 86.3 reading. Analysts were only looking for a three-point bump. Consumers increased their expectations of a stronger economy over the coming six months.

Combined with the significant increase in consumer confidence and spending, the Federal Reserve confirmation of a continuance of record low interest rates for the foreseeable future is expected to increase mortgage refinancing opportunities and free up additional assets for consumers to deploy and further stimulate the economy.

The Fed's Friday announcement regarding increased accessibility for small businesses to its Main Street Lending Program signaled a massive opportunity for small businesses. The minimum loan amounts were decreased from \$250,000 to \$100,000, and the Fed is reducing the borrowing fees. Small and mid-sized businesses are expected to take advantage of the favorable loan terms and extended payback period to maintain their operations.

The ISM Manufacturing index surged to 59.3 in October, well above expectations. It also was the highest reading in 2 years. It signals the economy is strengthening with new orders hitting a 17-year high.

Third-quarter gross domestic product, a measure of the total goods and services produced in the July-to-September period, expanded at a 33.1% annualized pace, according to the Department of Commerce's initial estimate for the period. This number is quite deceiving in that the GDP had declined 31.4% in the second quarter. The GDP has performed according to this table this year:

<u>2020 Quarter</u>	<u>GPD \$Trillion</u>
1	21.6
2	15.9
3	21.2



2020-2021 ESP Board of Directors

President	Mary Ann Schilling
President-Elect	Paul Roback
Past President	Dan Marzu
Secretary	Cindy Sarkady
Treasurer	Patrick Nehring
Director, State	Peggy Compton
Director, State	Matt Hanson
Director, Retirees	Chris Kniep
Director, Retirees	Karen Joos
Director, County	Aerica Bjurstrom
Director, County	Mandi Dornfeld
Annalist	Vacant

Ex-Officio Board Members

Historian	Melanie Miller
Newsletter	Katie Gellings



Mission of Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP)

Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) is dedicated to fostering standards of excellence in the Extension System and developing the Extension profession and professional.

Vision of Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP)

Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) leads the Extension System in providing and facilitating professional development that focuses on the Extension organization and the Extension professional.

