



Sept. 8, 2023

## Kansas Agricultural Leadership Program Names New Program Manager

MANHATTAN, Kan. – The Kansas Agriculture and Rural Leadership Program has named a community development professional and entrepreneur as its new Leadership Program Manager and Facilitator.

In her new role with KARL, Gretchin Staples of Beloit, Kansas, is responsible for developing and facilitating the organization’s educational sessions, managing class communication and resources. She began her new position Aug. 21.

“Stepping into this role as program manager and facilitator is an opportunity to be involved in the success stories of rural Kansas, and it’s an honor to work with the KARL leadership team,” Staples said. “This organization plays a key part in activating leaders across our state, and I’m looking forward to seeing the success stories continue.”

“We are excited to welcome Gretchin to KARL,” said Jill Zimmerman, KARL president. With her background in rural development and curriculum planning plus her knowledge of the state, she brings terrific experience to our team.”

A graduate of Kansas State University, Staples was involved in the Leadership Mitchell County program in 2019. Involvement in that program’s curriculum and development sparked her interest in the KARL program.

After owning and operating Shabby Shed Furniture and Interior Design in Osborne for 10 years, she relocated her family to Beloit to manage Schnell and Pestinger Furniture. With both children now grown, she used her experience and creativity to open bizDISTRICT, a community designed for resources and support of small rural business owners.

Most recently, Staples spent the last four years operating the Rural & Remote program with the Economic Innovation Center, Inc. out of Norton, Kansas.

Working remotely herself, while educating and coaching participants to achieve remote work success while living in northwest Kansas has been a rewarding experience, she said. Staples will primarily be based from her coworking space in Beloit.

In her new role, Staples joins an organization that was founded in 1989 that prepares leaders to have a positive impact on Kansas agriculture and rural communities. KARL class members from across the state spend two years connecting with and learning from others through 10 multi-day seminars throughout the state, as well as a national study tour to Washington, D.C. and an international study tour. Previous KARL classes have visited farms, agricultural processing facilities and businesses in countries around the world, including China, United Arab Emirates, Chile and South Africa.



KARL began as an initiative of the Kellogg Foundation as a leadership development resource for production agriculturists and is a part of the International Association of Programs for Agriculture Leadership.

Information about the KARL program is available at [karlprogram.com](http://karlprogram.com) or 785-532-6300.  
KARL Class XVII applications for 2024-2025 open Jan. 1, 2024.

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