



READY FOR ANYTHING

Stephanie Pruitt served as an intern for the Texas Peanut Producers Board (TPPB) and the Texas Corn Producers Board (TCPB) in 2008, and she must have made a good impression, because as soon as the communications director position opened, she was called personally by the executive directors for the job.

As the communications director for the TPPB, and the TCPB, Pruitt juggles many tasks, from writing news releases to updating the website. She said she has to maintain the integrity of both of her commodities, due to many issues that have been misconstrued by the media.

High corn prices and peanut allergies are sensitive subjects, and if not handled with care, can lead to disastrous economic environments for producers. Human beings possess a sentimentality that directly affects what they purchase or support, Pruitt said. Therefore, it is no wonder why communication directors are handy to have around.

“Proving the value, necessity and good reputation of a commodity or service,” Pruitt said, “is the number one reason I have a job. The second reason is because of

the Texas Tech University Department of Agricultural Education and Communications.”

As a Texas Tech graduate, Pruitt was prepped, molded and shaped for the position she now holds. However, the class hours alone did not land her this career. As Pruitt said, “I am a true testament that internships pay off.”

Associate Professor Cindy Akers said that student success often depends heavily on internships.

“Holding more than one internship, excelling in that internship and being heavily involved in the department extracurricular activities made Stephanie Pruitt highly marketable,” Akers said

Pruitt said she would rank Texas Tech University Agricultural Education and Communications Department as the best in the state. A better education could not have been asked for, Pruitt said.

Erica Irlbeck, assistant professor in the department taught Pruitt in a video production course, and believes in the value of the Texas Tech agricultural communications degree plan.

“The way we have our degree plan set up here at Texas Tech,” Irlbeck said, “is completely compatible with



Pruitt is the communications support behind corn and peanut commodities.



communications careers across the country.” Students are exposed to several different aspects of the communications realm, Irlbeck said, such as, video production, advertising, campaign development, marketing and graphic design courses.

Pruitt said she felt prepared for her current position due to pragmatic and theoretical experience in her degree plan at Texas Tech.

Pruitt demonstrates a true passion for the commodities she represents, and she said she feels like she made the right decision early on in her education to study in communications.

“I absolutely love my job,” Pruitt said, “It’s challenging to keep the commodities separate, but I enjoy working on my peanut side and my corn side. One of the current issues with the corn industry is water use. Draft regulations for water use were recently approved by the High Plains Underground Water District #1, which reduces water use for corn producers, drastically affecting their livelihood.

Pruitt is assisting with the campaign, Water Grows Our Economy; Let’s Make it Last, in an effort to protect corn producers and communicate the affects on our economy if producers cannot yield enough crop to subsist.

“We have a lot of issues with corn,” Pruitt said, “however, water is one of the biggest and most concerning issues we have to deal with. With the initial draft regulations from the High Plains Underground Water

Conservation District, our economy could be severely affected in a negative way. It is my job to communicate to the producers about water regulations as well as creative ways to produce the same amount of crop with less water.

Pruitt said she also helps spread awareness of these issues through social media. The rise of free mass communication with millions of people has made Pruitt’s job much easier, she said.

The experience of fighting for agriculture is rewarding, Pruitt said, and nothing is better than knowing a difference is being made because of hard work, effort, determination and creativity. **T**

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Kara Bishop | Afton, Texas

