

The Middle of NoWhere Or The *Center* of Vitality

A few days ago, an AAW member who was in Texas and I struggled to maintain a phone call. After three or four tries, her text came through, “I’m in the middle of nowhere and service dropped.”

Last week, I visited with the Missouri Director of Agriculture and she must keep two different cell company contracts and phones to attempt to make and receive calls as she travels the state.



There’s a four-county area in Illinois where people jokingly say, “We live in Forgotonia.” The land where infrastructure for wireless communications, roads, water, and emergency services is few and far between.

Does this look or sound familiar?

Much of my adult life mission is centered around the idea that we in rural America are not “nowhere” and we are not “nobody.” We have much to offer – talent, innovation, work ethic, common sense – in addition to the beauty, serenity and contrast we experience every day. In fact, we could reframe the situation to say we are at the *center* of vitality. Food production and active, experienced management of natural resources are vital to everyone’s survival.

Right now we all have the chance to improve our ability to contribute from our ‘center of vitality’ in a few ways.

One – Ask your Member of Congress to sign on to [House Resolution 1329](#) and your U.S. Senators to co-sponsor [Senate Resolution 712](#) recognizing the need for greater access to rural and agricultural media programming. Both are bi-partisan efforts to raise awareness of the need for access to media in rural areas as well as rural programming options in urban areas. You can read the text of each resolution by searching their title at www.congress.gov. By supporting a resolution, we lay groundwork for additional legislative and regulatory efforts to ensure that spectrum is allocated to rural areas and for increased capacity for exchange of data and information through other programs like the Rural Development Opportunity Fund and ReConnect America.

Two – if you have a smartphone, download the [FCC \(Federal Communications Commission\) Speedtest app](#). The purpose of the app is to allow you to log data on the quality of cellular service and data wherever you are. It does not follow you all the time – unless you set it to run tests in the background. You open it and run a speed test from the acre where you stand or work. Test the performance of your mobile and Wi-Fi networks, set limits on the test to reflect your normal usage, look at your data over time and over geography. The agency is using that data to ground truth what kind of service is truly available throughout the U.S.

Three – Sustain your personal vitality by participating in person at an Agri-Women meeting. Our national convention is coming up in Bozeman, Nov. 2-6th. 2023 takes us to some fun destinations with AAW Mid-Year in Nashville, Tennessee, April 12-15th; Fly-In to Washington, D.C., June 4-7th; and next year’s convention in Sacramento, California November 2-5th. Plus, you could plug in at a number of Agri-Women affiliate events like the Illinois Agri-Women’s Women Changing the Face of Agriculture in March or the California Women for Ag’s barbecue event or Minnesota’s leadership conference and more.

Four – Explore ways you could engage locally to expand your internet/broadband offerings. In September, the Rural Leaders podcast invited me as a guest on [Episode 8](#) as part of a series they are doing to inform people how they can get better internet. You can find the podcast series at: <https://www.nationalgrassrootsmedia.com/shows/the-rural-leaders-podcast/>



Or you could help others increase their vitality. Our AAW First V.P. Rose Tryon-VanCott was featured on a podcast series for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in California. The series has a number of useful topics to inform those who are just putting their roots down and provide information and fresh perspectives to those who have been yielding fruit in farming and ranching.

Whatever modes you choose to make a difference – or as we in Agri-Women say, “Speak Out!” - please keep in mind that

You Are Vital.
Thank you, for all you do,
Heather

