

2018 Michigan Good Food Summit

Breakout Session #2: Plate to Politics/Women Leading from the Farmhouse to the White House

10:30 am

Speakers: Ash Bruxvoort, Women, Food and Agriculture; Kathie Dunbar, Lansing City Council; Amanda Edmonds, AM Edmonds, LLC

Plate to Politics

- Women's Food and Agriculture Network: engages women to lead through individual and community power (has 3 programs)
 - Plate to politics: encourages women to run for office
 - Harvesting our potential: pairs women who want to farm with women who do currently farm
 - Women caring for the land: women taught about their rights as landowners and how to manage land and cooperate with owners
- Plate to politics
 - Encourages more to run for public office at all levels
 - Encourages a mindset of: RUN AS YOU ARE
 - Talk about what you're passionate about and speak on topics that inspire you
- Why Plate to Politics?
 - Rural women are underrepresented in politics
 - Diverse leadership is better
 - Women are more likely to reach across the aisle to facilitate change, think about consequences, and engage in their communities as a whole

Guest Panel

- The remainder of the presentation consisted of Q/A facilitated by Ash Bruxvoort with guests Amanda Edmonds and Kathie Dunbar
- Conversation Key
 - AB: Ash Bruxvoort
 - AE: Amanda Edmonds
 - KD: Kathie Dunbar

**** Content below is not direct quotes, but summary of questions and answers provided****

- AB: Women are more likely to run for office if they are asked as opposed to self-identifying, were you asked to run for office?
 - KD: No, not asked to run. I was told to change, conform, get rid of my piercings, so instead I went out and got a bigger one. I broke the stereotype and chose to

run on my own because I was tired of clawing my way up the tree for crumbs, wanted to be the person in the tree.

- AE: I believe that leadership is about having the right leader at the right time, and the right fit. I looked at the reps and didn't see people who represented my identity, and I knew that I had the skills needed to perform this role, so I decided to run on my own and had to fight to show my talents.
- AB: Got into politics after attending Plate to Politics workshop, where I was recruited by the Iowa Farmer's Union Board to run. Because I could tell stories from my background and relate to the people in the community – I won.
- AB: Not everyone has a support system, what was campaigning like?
 - AE: I found support from varying networks, but their focus was mainly on key national and state races, not local. I reached out and created an informal network locally and across the state, becoming each other's support. Support is needed at the local levels to build a pipeline, recruit young women, support school board candidates, work on campaigns, and college students to volunteer because at the local level there is an opportunity to make real, significant changes.
 - KD: When campaigning it doesn't all have to be political, and you can find a common space to relate on a personal level with anyone. When moving to a new town, went around to speak with and meet all the neighbors and connect. This bridges a gap when you're running for office and helps people relate to you, not to the issues only. Most local races are NOT partisan, so these relationships are very important regardless of party.
- AB: How did you know that you were ready to run?
 - AE: You'll never know, you need to just take a leap.
 - KD: Being a stand-up comic, I want to influence people's thoughts with my words. You're told who votes, so I was just told focus on the list. I wondered "why aren't those people voting?" So I went to those houses specifically and was told that I was the first person to come to their door, that's the vote that you need.
- AB: Other advice or strategies on running for office?
 - AE: The media is not your friend. The number of people who are commenting and negatively speaking up on social media are a small and loud minority. You need to serve all people, not just the vocal crowd. Unplug yourself from the negative social media minority and make yourself available to everyone with a voice instead.
 - KD: You can get absorbed in the system that you're serving and forget what's actually going on in your community. In creating policy around sanctuary city, many people had a visceral reaction to the topic, but were greatly disconnected

from the reality of the policies facts and effects. I had to remember who I serve and not get caught up in social media discussion around what I was doing.

- AE: Doing policy work has inspired me about what good policy can do, because when we get behind the table we can make a difference. One important thing to do is not make the other side your enemy, instead find the one thing that you both have in common and take the next step together at every level.
- AB: Personally has had experience with the use of social media in the MeToo movement, and sharing your thoughts/experiences while challenging, is important because you never know who you're truly serving. People you didn't think would be affected may share your same experiences and needs.
- AB: Do you ever cry, have you cried while serving in office?
 - AE: Yes, all the time.
 - KD: Of course, completely.
 - AB: We're taught as women that you have to be strong and not show emotion, but in reality emotions show that you care and are passionate about your work.
- GUEST: Are there any pointers or techniques to help unplug from social media?
 - AE: Block people on Facebook, go off of community sites, don't read articles about yourself. Instead, have someone else read and filter for anything that's important and leave out anything that's not relevant.
 - KD: Uninstall Facebook from your phone. It doesn't need to be with you always.
 - AE: Ensure that there is a support network for your family and friends, not just you. Seeing negative articles, photos, and speech about you and your loved ones can be harder on them since they don't encounter it regularly.
- GUEST: How can we support people that are running if we don't want to run? Other than money and being active in a campaign?
 - AE: I was told that I needed to be tougher and have a thicker skin, but they nobody was coming down on the bullies for bullying. Call out behavior as unacceptable, because, ultimately we will all come up with better and more successful policy this way.
 - KD: Generally, people are very vocal about what they don't want, but people don't talk about what they DO want. Come to the meetings and show your support for issues and policies that you agree with, because often the whole audience is negative and the positive feedback is not properly represented.