



LeadAR

Member **SPOTLIGHT**
Class 19

UofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System



Susan Koehler

Manager

NWA Land Trust and Benton County Fair

Susan has worked in several industries and in the urban centers of Chicago and Denver. In 2006, she moved to Arkansas to join Sam's Club and lead corporate communications. While with Sam's Club she had broad responsibilities including developing campaigns for Fair Trade products, private label wines, Sam's retail food donation program with Feeding America, showcasing diverse suppliers and launching the availability of international artisan cheeses — where she traveled to Italy to interview cheesemakers, and to tour farms.

In 2011, Susan joined the Walmart Foundation to lead a strategic philanthropic initiative to support small business owner access to education resources, and capital. In 2017, she made the move to work with nonprofits full-time and currently supports the NWA Land Trust, where she leads its farmland preservation program, and she supports the Benton County Fair, overseeing the annual event and its facilities. Susan and her husband Bob live on a small horse farm west of Centerton, AR in Benton County.

Why did you apply to the LeadAR program? What motivated you?

I want to have a greater impact in my work and since it is focused on AR based efforts, I am excited to be learning with other leaders across the state and about the state. The University of Arkansas Extension program is comprehensive, and I am grateful for the opportunity to take advantage of this resource to grow professionally and personally.

What leadership quality do you admire most in others? Why?

Humility is a characteristic of leadership that may be overlooked, but when I see a leader with humility, I am very inspired. I think having humility as a leader helps to make people more comfortable around you and if people are comfortable with you, then they are more likely to be honest when you need to hear the truth, and others may be willing to share ideas with you that could solve challenges.

What is something people would be surprised to learn about you? Why is this surprising?

I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2015. My close friends and colleagues were aware, but I have not been very public about it. I am super lucky and blessed it was caught early, and my prognosis is excellent. I think this would be surprising to people because I am generally outgoing. I am happy to help others who may be going through this.

What are your top three ingredients necessary for success?

1. Showing Up
2. Being Open to feedback and new ideas
3. Including others who want to help

What are your top three ingredients necessary for happiness?

1. Someone to Love
2. Something to do
3. Something to look forward to

Describe your personal leadership style.

I think I lean toward Servant Leadership. I find some situations may require varied leadership styles or philosophies too.

What is something you hope to gain from your LeadAR experience?

I hope to strengthen my professional and personal network so I can help others and be more effective.

How can effective leadership help move the state of Arkansas forward?

We need diverse leaders across a variety of industries, locations, and cultures within our state in order to prepare for the future and steward our resources effectively. There are a lot of economic differences between the regions of our state and I'd like to see committed leaders working together to lift all of Arkansas.

You are stranded on a desert island. What are your three MUST HAVE items?

1. matches
2. bug spray
3. sunscreen

What is something that was difficult for you six months ago but easy for you now?

I continue to get better at Excel.

What else do you want others to know about you?

I've been married for 22 years to Bob Koehler and have two dogs, Dobra and Daisy.