

“WORKING WITH WISCONSIN FAMILIES”**Lana Anderson, Family Living Educator, (715) 232-1636****December 7, 2005****Reaching Dunn County’s New Parents for 10 Years**

“Parents of babies born in Dunn County at Myrtle Werth Hospital-Mayo Health System in Menomonie have been receiving up to date parenting information through the “Parenting the First Year” newsletter series since 1995 and 2,606 families have received it through November of 2005,” says Lana Anderson, University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Educator for Dunn County. “We began distribution of Parenting the 2nd and 3rd Years bi-monthly series in 1999 and 1,123 families completed receiving the series through last month.”

Kiwanis of Menomonie, Kiwanis of Colfax, Myrtle Werth Auxiliary, Optimist International, Myrtle Werth and Red Cedar—Mayo Health System, Dunn County Health, and Dunn County UW-Extension have committed time, energy, support and funding for this project since the project began. Kiwanis of Menomonie has paid for the printing of most of the newsletters.

The Parenting Newsletter Project has been delivered to nearly half of all new Wisconsin parents for over a decade. Two series of instructional newsletters— “Parenting the First Year” and “Parenting the Second and Third Years”—are delivered free to new parents throughout the state. Approximately 500,000 families have received “Parenting the First Year” in the last 17 years. An additional 22,000 Wisconsin families received “Parenting the Second and Third Years” in 2003.

According to Lana Anderson, University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Educator in Dunn County, an obstetrical nurse at Myrtle Werth Medical Center-Mayo Health System offers parents of babies born there the opportunity to receive “Parenting the First Year” and “Parenting the 2nd and 3rd Years” newsletter series delivered to their home. This is a gift from a group of agencies who want to assist parents in getting off to a good start with their children.

This inexpensive, effective parenting education program has had some important outcomes for Wisconsin families. Research has shown that these parents have changed both their beliefs and actions in raising their children. Parents also rated the “Parenting the First Year” newsletter series “very useful” as a source of child rearing advice more often than any other source.

The newsletters also help parents of toddlers get their young children started on chores; make their homes safer; stimulate their children's language development at this key age; and provide suggestions for child guidance and discipline.

“It has been 7 ½ years since I had a baby. I have 3 boys and finally got a daughter – your newsletters are so helpful because there are so many things I forgot. I feel like a new mom and your newsletter helps me through so many questions. Keep mine coming!! Thank you,” said a Dunn County parent.

The monthly, age-paced newsletters provide guidance and discipline ideas and language learning activities. They are written at the fifth-grade reading level and are available in English or Spanish. Parents receive the newsletters by mail, monthly for the first year of the child's life, and bi-monthly during the child's second and third year. This is especially significant because many of the parents who most need parenting education are also the least likely to come to a class. People in fifteen other states and Canada and Britain use the newsletters.

UW-Extension offices in 62 counties coordinate distribution of the newsletters in partnership with more than 140 Kiwanis Clubs, 85 hospitals and health departments, and dozens of other businesses and service clubs. UW-Extension's community partners raise approximately \$215,000 a year for printing and postage. Last year, approximately 770 volunteers from these partner organizations donated more than 5,200 hours to coordinate the mailings.

In Dunn County, the Parenting Newsletter Project has added “Parenting Future Readers,” a set of literacy inserts that can also be used as teaching tools. This gives guidance to parents in working with their children so that they develop a readiness to learn and read. It helps parents develop their child's school readiness.

The Parenting Newsletters are found online at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/parenting>. They can be ordered from Cooperative Extension Publications by calling (877) 947-7827; by Fax: (414) 389-9130; or online at <http://cecommerce.uwex.edu/>. The newsletters and other parenting education materials may also be found on the UW-Extension Family Living Programs web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/families/parented.cfm>.

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Caption for photo: Lana Anderson, University of Wisconsin-Extension Family Living Educator for Dunn County points out the back page listing of agencies sponsoring the Parenting the 1st Year, Parenting the 2nd and 3rd Years newsletters to Kiwanis of Menomonie President Dori Van Schoonhoven and Kiwanis Newsletter Coordinator Mike Steilmeyer as they plan for another printing of newsletters. Eva Addisa Perez accompanied grandpa to the meeting.

