

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

### Parenting the First Year (PFY) Newsletter Promotes Competent Parenting and Helps Prevent Abusive Parenting – Nan Baumgartner

More than 35,000 Wisconsin children are victims of suspected child abuse each year. It's not that those parents want to harm their kids. Many just don't know what's involved in successful parenting. Research tells us that parents who abuse their children often have inaccurate beliefs about children's abilities. With this in mind, Fond du Lac County UW-Extension, St. Agnes Hospital Women and Infants Unit and three local Kiwanis clubs co-sponsor a 12-part newsletter series mailed directly to approximately 900 new parents in Fond du Lac County annually. The eight-page newsletters follow a child's monthly development during the first year and have been provided free to parents who deliver at St. Agnes for the past 13 years. The goals of the newsletter are to promote competent parenting and prevent abusive parenting. Recent evaluations conducted by UW-Extension with parents receiving the newsletter in Fond du Lac County revealed positive results on both accounts:

- **Parents report positive changes in their parenting.** Parents report that reading the newsletters led them to change their child-rearing behaviors in six key areas. According to the majority of the PFY parents (63%), the newsletters had the greatest impact on prompting them to "provide more things for my baby to feel, look at, and listen to." This is important because early experience has a big effect on children's later abilities. By their own report, 51% also indicated the newsletters caused them to be less angry when their baby was difficult.
- **The newsletters are very useful.** 57 percent of the PFY parents rated the newsletter very useful, about the same rating as advice from doctors and nurses (58%) and higher than all other sources of information. One PFY parent commented, "Keep up the good work. I look forward to each newsletter. I have talked to three or four friends about the newsletter and they love them. It is a wonderful thing to get and a huge help. The newsletter answers questions I didn't know I had."
- **Parents really read the newsletters.** Over half of all parents (57%) reported they read "all articles in all issues" of the newsletters. Almost half (48%) reported they "keep and file" the newsletter. In nearly half of the families (44%) the spouse or partner reads the newsletter. As one parent shared, "I think the newsletter is great! I look forward to it each month because I don't have a ton of time to read books about it. The newsletter gives good, practical information in a nice format and can be read and referenced easily."

## HUMAN HEALTH & NUTRITION

### Another Successful Year for Youth Tractor and Machinery Safety Training and Certification – Mike Rankin

*"My sons attended your tractor safety classes this year and I would like to say THANK YOU to all the people who took their time to teach. We have attended other tractor safety classes in a different county with my daughter and it was all classroom (very hard to keep a person's attention for hours at a time). Having the classes at the different implement dealers was a good idea. It kept everyone interested and offered them learning tools by having the machinery right there. Thanks again, everyone's time given was so much appreciated."* .....Mother of 2007 Tractor Safety Program participants

No business or industry can hire a 14-year-old youth to work around machinery. No industry, that is, except agriculture. When working on a farm, the owner/employer or employees act as their own workplace safety officer in an environment that is extremely dangerous. Statistics tell us that thousands of people get hurt or killed on farms each year. For these reasons, farm safety education is extremely important. The Fond du Lac County UW-Extension Office offers the Wisconsin Tractor and Machinery Certification Safety Program to county youth on an annual basis. Youth who work on farms are required to take the course if they are at least 12 years of age and want to drive tractor on a public road as they work for their parents or if they are 14 years old and want to operate farm machinery for a non-related employer. These guidelines are set forth by federal and state statutes. In Fond du Lac County, the course consists of lectures, guest speakers, videos, and hands-on activities at local farm machinery dealers. Participants must also pass a written and driving examination after the 20 hours of instruction are concluded. In 2007, fifteen youth successfully completed the program. The Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Department, volunteer fire departments, and county emergency medical personnel have wholeheartedly endorsed the program.

**FOND DU LAC COUNTY UW-EXTENSION**  
Room 227, Administration/Extension Building  
400 University Drive  
Fond du Lac, WI 54935  
Phone: (920) 929-3170/748-7565/324-2879  
Website: <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu>

Nan Baumgartner, Family Living Educator  
Paul Dyk, Dairy and Livestock Agent  
Position Vacant, Community Resource Dev. Agent  
Mike Rankin, Crops and Soils Agent  
Denise Retzleff, 4-H and Youth Agent  
Shelley Tidemann, Family Living Educator

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