

## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES



### Strengthening Families through Relationship Education – Nan Baumgartner

While married-couple households in Fond du Lac County have decreased from 88.3% in 1980 to 83.7% in 2000, the vast majority of adults will still either marry or form a committed couple relationship at some point in their lives. But healthy couple relationships don't just happen. They take commitment, time and relationship skills that many people have never learned. Relationship education research tells us that there are specific behaviors, skills, and communication patterns that support high quality couple relationships and, increasingly, this information is being translated into prevention/intervention programs designed to help couples develop and maintain healthy, mutually satisfying relationships. Fond du Lac County is part of a statewide initiative called ThinkMarriage run by the Foundation for a Great Marriage out of Green Bay. Funding for relationship education programs is coming from two Federal grants with the long term goal of lowering the divorce rate in Wisconsin and providing people the hope and skills necessary to achieve happy, lifelong marriages. In Fond du Lac County UWEX is partnering on this local initiative by co-facilitating the research-based relationship education program called P.R.E.P. (Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program). A billboard campaign about healthy relationships and distribution of a brochure dispelling marriage myths are other local efforts to date.

## ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



### January is Radon Awareness Month – Diana Hammer Tscheschlok

- ⊗ Radon is the second leading cause of death from lung cancer among smokers and the **first cause of lung cancer among non-smokers.**
- ⊗ EPA estimates that 21,000 people per year die from radon exposure, which is higher than the rates of people dying from drowning, home fires, or drunk driving.
- ⊗ Radon is an invisible, odorless gas that occurs naturally as uranium in soil, rock, and water decays. As a type of radiation, it is measured in Pico curies per Liter. A measurement above 4 pCi/L could indicate a need to have your home mitigated.
- ⊗ 1 out of every 15 homes in the U.S. is expected to have elevated levels of radon (4pCi/L or more).
- ⊗ Fond du Lac County zip code areas with the highest average testing scores for radon include:
  - Waupun (53963): 9.1 pCi/L      - South Byron area near Brownsville (53006): 7.5 pCi/L
  - Brandon (53919): 8.7 pCi/L      - Town of Rosendale (54964): 6.3 pCi/L
  - Fairwater (53931): 7.8 pCi/L
- ⊗ Radon gets into your home through:
  - Cracks in solid floors.                      - Gaps around service pipes.
  - Construction joints.                        - Cavities inside walls.
  - Cracks in walls.                              - The water supply.
  - Gaps in suspended floors.
- ⊗ The presence or absence of radon can **only** be determined through testing and can change over time. Therefore it is important to test regularly in your own home, especially if construction occurs around your home or you are finishing or remodeling a lower floor of your home in which to live. **Do not** rely on neighbors' test results or on previous testing in your own home.
- ⊗ Low cost test kits can be obtained from the Fond du Lac County Health Department by calling 1-800-547-3640.

More information can be found on the Fond du Lac County UW-Extension's website: <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu>.

## AGRICULTURAL PROFITABILITY



### On-farm Testing and Learning – Mike Rankin

The foundation of UW-Extension is research based information. Most of the time the research is done on state owned experiment stations located throughout Wisconsin. However, there has always been value derived from either research or demonstration field plots that are established on "real" farms. Sometimes these are done to verify results from more controlled experiments and sometimes they offer new information. Whatever the case, well-planned on farm research trials can be valuable learning tools and they often grab the attention of crop producers to a greater extent than agricultural research farm experiments. We have always placed a high importance on annually

conducting some localized on-farm research here in Fond du Lac County. Here's a brief description of two such efforts started in 2007:

Earless Corn Silage: Corn hybrids from South America and the southern U.S. were grown in a test plot on the John Bertram farm, Malone, to gauge the feasibility of this germplasm for dairy heifer and dry cow diets. One of the traditional problems with standard corn silage for these animals is that it is "too good" and the animals become fat. Southern-adapted hybrids grow tall but don't produce an ear in our environment, offering the potential for high yields with lower starch content.

Alfalfa Yield and Persistence Program: Unlike corn and soybeans, virtually no "real" farm alfalfa yield data is available to analyze and compare production systems and cutting schedules. The reason: it's much more difficult to harvest and weigh in an efficient manner that doesn't slow down the harvest operation. In recent years, some farms have installed their own on-farm truck scales. This now makes yield measurements for individual fields much easier. Beginning in 2007, a statewide alfalfa yield program was initiated by UW-Extension to begin collecting data on production fields over a period of several years. Two farms in Fond du Lac County are participating.

**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

Mike Rankin, Crops and Soils Agent

Denise Retzleff, 4-H Youth Development Educator

Shelley Tidemann, Family Living Educator

Diana Hammer Tscheschlok, Community, Natural

Resource & Economic Development Educator

ak 1/29/08