
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

The Arts are an Important Part of the 4-H Program – Denise Retzleff

In 2006, Wisconsin 4-H had 19,000 youth enrolled in visual arts, performing arts and communications projects. A statewide evaluation was conducted to determine the value of youth participation in these areas. Respondents agreed that 4-H participation in the arts and communication areas increases teamwork and technical skills, and develops confidence and creativity. These project areas help them be motivated to do their best, give them a sense of satisfaction, and ownership over their own work.

The evaluation found significant ways in which 4-H programs are different than arts and communications offered through schools, private lessons, church and other community organizations. Most notably, the 4-H program involves new and different people than youth customarily interact with or know; there are more choices and freedom in creativity and expression as compared to requirements and structure in schools; a more nurturing, comfortable environment in which to explore, take risks, and develop creativity, self-confidence, and leadership; and a focus on mastery, which encourages youth to pursue interests sparked in schools and families, while receiving feedback and sharing their skills with others. The 4-H approach provides an important complement to other family, school, and community-based institutions in helping achieve optimal outcomes for youth.

Thanks go to the Fond du Lac County 4-H members who responded to the statewide survey. We have 416 members participating in arts and communication activities including, speaking, writing, photography, drawing and painting, theatre, music, clowning, music fest, leathercraft, and ceramics. In addition, our youth participate in state 4-H events such as art camp, Showcase Singers and Drama Company. An important aspect of these 4-H programs is the many volunteers who share their expertise in the arts. They provide supportive relationships that encourage youth to stay engaged and to improve their work.

AGRICULTURAL PROFITABILITY

Dairy Partner / El Companero Newsletter Arrives – Paul Dyk

In Fond du Lac County, over 59% of the cows are on dairy farms that have over 150 cows. On most of these dairy farms, employees are responsible for much of the labor involved in feeding, cleaning and caring of the dairy cattle. There has been no newsletter in Wisconsin (& perhaps the US) that has targeted these employees on a continuous basis. Most publications and newsletters have targeted owners, operators, managers and sometimes herdsmen of these operations. The new Dairy Partner / El Companero has its eyes set on changing this. The newsletter is a 4 page (2 page English / 2 page Spanish) newsletter that communicates basic farm skills to employees. In addition, the newsletter will have a small safety section and a life skills section. With the help of some industry sponsors, the newsletter will be printed in color with high quality pictures to improve value to employees with various levels of education. For 2007 the newsletter will be distributed bimonthly to not only farms in Fond du Lac County but, in total, 500 farms in eastern WI (1000 issues) that represent about 50% of the cows on the eastern side of the state.

HUMAN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program's Overview of Nutrition Education Efforts for the 2006 Year End – Shelley Tidemann

The Fond du Lac County Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) is a UW-Extension Family Living nutrition education program that helps limited resource families and individuals choose healthful diets, purchase and prepare healthful food and handle it safely, and become more food secure by spending their food dollars wisely. WNEP is funded by federal dollars. The program housed out of Fond du Lac County also serves Green Lake County.

In fiscal year 2006, 1,981 learners attended one or more WNEP educational events; 200 more contacts than 2005. Nearly half (45%) of the participants represented families with children, 39% were youth ages 5-17, and 16% were adults without children. The majority of the participants were women (63%), but 2006 saw an increase in male participation in the program. Participants were 79% white, 5% African American, 2% Asian American, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native and 14% other. The 2006 year saw an increase in Hispanic/Latino program participants from 9% in 2005 to 14%. Sixty-two percent (1,222) of the learners attended a multi-group session, 22% (439) attended one-time group sessions and 16% (308) attended a learn-while-you-wait session. The remaining 1% attended an individual learner (one-on-one) session. The one time group sessions were just short of doubling from 2005 reported numbers. Fifty-five percent (1,084) of learners attended a teaching event that addressed a dietary quality outcome, 31% (613) of the learners attended a teaching event addressing a food resource management outcome, and the remaining 284 (14%) received information on food safety and food security outcome topics.

The program emphasized indirect contacts in 2006 with three displays; one was to promote WNEP at the City-County Building in Fond du Lac and Green Lake DSS building. This was a first – to put up such a display on promoting the WNEP program in the two counties. Self-referrals did come from the displays. The other two displays were targeted to families with children, 70 attended. The topics focused on were under the categories of choosing a healthful diet and community programs and resources to improve food security. In addition to displays, 17,966 families with children were reached through newsletters or lessons by mail. This year, the Fond du Lac/Green Lake program strengthened the collaboration with the Salvation Army with educational activity sheets enclosed in the Brown Bag Lunch Program. The Salvation Army prepared and delivered 1,200 brown bag lunches a week during the summer break from school. WNEP developed 9 different educational inserts in the areas of food safety and vegetable consumption, which were a part of the 16,230 lunches that were provided by Salvation Army throughout the 2006 summer lunch 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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