
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Connecting with Families: Make a Difference that Lasts! – Nan Baumgartner

Successfully raising children continues to be one of the most important responsibilities faced by society. While families remain the primary place where children are raised, there is increasing recognition that others share this task outside of the immediate family, due in part to parental employment and to the increasing number of parents unable to care for children because of issues related to substance abuse, incarceration, poverty, neglect, or death. Research tells us that high quality early care and education programs produce greater gains in child development than do low quality programs. So it would behoove us to work hard to provide opportunities for those caring for our children to get continual education and support in their important role.

As part of a continuing education plan for child care staff, UW-Extension in Fond du Lac County and Dodge County have been piloting a new educational series entitled, "Connecting with Families in Early Care and Education: Make a Difference That Lasts!" The five part series includes research and best practices on involving families in the early care and education setting. It focuses on the importance of child care providers and parents becoming partners in supporting optimal growth and development of our nation's greatest asset – its children.

AGRICULTURAL PROFITABILITY

Nutrient Management Training for Fond du Lac County Farmers – Mike Rankin

How nutrients (commercial and farm generated) are applied to the land impacts all residents of our community. Excessive runoff from farm fields can cause polluted surface and ground waters. Proper nutrient application has both environmental and economic benefits. For the past six years, UW-Extension and the Land Conservation Office have offered Fond du Lac County livestock producers the opportunity to participate in the Wisconsin Nutrient Management Farmer Education Program. The program consists of a two-day educational workshop, private consultation on nutrient management strategies, manure spreader calibration, updated soil conservation and field maps, and the development of a comprehensive nutrient management plan. To date, nearly 50 farm operations have participated in the program along with their field crop consultants. Dairy herd size has ranged from nearly 100 to over 1000 milking cows in these operations.

Extensive survey work is done with these producers prior to, during, and after completion of the program. Upon completion of the training, 98 percent of participants were able to identify the recommended nitrogen recommendation for corn and the proper alfalfa nitrogen credit for alfalfa. Additionally, 100 percent of participants indicated they learned something that would improve their soil fertility management and 97 percent of participants indicated they would change some aspect of their fertility management as a result of the program.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Fox River Valley Area Woodland Owners Conference – Jim Hovland

The Fox River Valley Area Woodland Owners Conference provided educational information to woodlot owners. Program participants gained an understanding of woodlot management techniques that included tree planting, wildlife habitat, and protecting the woodlot from forest fires. Information was presented on establishment and selection of hardwood trees to plant in the woodlot. Additional program emphasis was placed on survey land and a representative from the Department of Justice talked about methamphetamine labs that are occurring in rural areas. During part of the program, local woodland owners talked about their woodlots and how they manage them. The program is developed through UW-Extension, WDNR Foresters, and the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association. UW-Extension specialists, WDNR Foresters, private consultants, and private landowners presented the information.

East Wisconsin Professional Landscapers Conference – Jim Hovland

Each year a workshop is held in Fond du Lac for professional grounds maintenance people. This year the workshop focused on landscape plants and tree nursery management practices. Program speakers focused on different management techniques in working with landscape plants. Program participants received information about insect and disease problems in the landscape and learned different recommended control methods. One component of the program talked about proper management of growing and maintaining turf and learning how to diagnose potential tree problems. UW-Extension specialists and county based educators presented the information to 67 people.

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