



Fond du Lac County University of Wisconsin-Extension 2007 Annual Report

Extending the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people where they live and work.

Surveying the Needs of Dairy Producers

A survey was completed this summer by Paul Dyk (Dairy and Livestock Agent) to assess the demographics and needs of the dairy producers in Fond du Lac County. There were 390 surveys delivered (by mail or in person) to all farms with a permit to sell raw milk. A total of 146 surveys were returned for a 37.4% return rate. Of those surveyed, 76% were under 150 cows and 34% were above 150 cows. Respondents were an average age of 50 years; they averaged 29 years employed in farming. Most respondents (97%) were male. When looking at education levels, 7% had less than a high school degree, 53% had a high school degree, and 40% had education beyond high school. For farms over 150 cows, 18% intend to continue milking for 5-10 years and 82% intend to milk for more than 10 years. For farms less than 150 cows, 12% intend to continue milking for less than 5 years, 27% for 5-10 years, and 61% for more than 10 years. Average daily milk production for herds over 150 cows was 67 lbs. while herds over 150 cows averaged 78 lbs. Most herds (94%) over 150 cows used freestalls for housing while only 25% of herds under 150 cows utilized freestalls.

In Fond du Lac County it is easy to see that there are large differences in management styles between smaller (<150 cows) and larger herds (>150 cows). Education programs will need to target the needs of these differing groups. ■

4-H and Boys & Girls Club Increase Youth Access to Afterschool Programs

The Boys & Girls Club of Fond du Lac and UW-Extension 4-H gave 100 young people in our community the opportunity to participate in afterschool programs through mini-grants from National 4-H Council and the JCPenney Afterschool Fund. Fond du Lac County received a \$50,000 mini-grant to increase access to safe, enriching places to go during weekday out-of-school hours for youth who are not in an afterschool program or are on the verge of leaving due to their family's economic situation. Programs are held Monday through Friday at Chegwin, Riverside, Pier, and Franklin and involve activities and skill development in areas such as: nutrition, computers, expressive arts, and environmental awareness.

Youth receiving mini-grants were given \$50 gift cards to

JCPenney stores to purchase clothing and items for the new school year. 4-H provided high quality after-school experiences for more than 400,000 youth nationwide in 2007. These mini-grants ensure all young people, regardless of their circumstances, have access to high-quality afterschool programs. ■



Photo: *Children in the Afterschool summer program participate in a team building activity. It is part of a series on leadership development led by Denise Retzleff, 4-H Youth Development Educator.*

Money Smart Week

October 7-13, 2007, was Fond du Lac County Money Smart Week, a collaborative effort of financial institutions, schools, non-profit organizations and government agencies joined together to provide a week of classes and events aimed to help consumers make informed choices when managing their personal finances. The activities and events were free and open to the public with no selling of products/services. In the state there were

roughly 500 free classes offered. In Fond du Lac there were approximately 50 free classes offered and attended by 300 people on many different financial topics for people of all ages and walks of life. Twenty-six partners worked together to plan and hold Money Smart Week in Fond du Lac County.



Fond du Lac County was selected to be one of 12 efforts in the state. Money

Smart Week activities are supported by the Governors Council on Financial Literacy, Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions; plus the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago. 2007 was the first year Fond du Lac County was involved with Money Smart Week.

2008 dates are October 12-18. Check out the website at: www.moneysmartwi.org for class offerings. ■

Parenting the First Year (PFY) Newsletter Promotes Competent Parenting and Helps Prevent Abusive Parenting

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 newsletter evaluations conducted by UW-Extension revealed positive results on both accounts:



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." ■

Parents report positive changes in their parenting. 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

New Staff



Diana Hammer Tscheschlok began as the Community, Natural Resources, and Economic Development Educator with UW-Extension in August. Citizens and local elected officials can call Diana for

educational and facilitation assistance in the areas of water quality, workforce diversity, community and organizational planning, and air quality. As a Spanish speaker, Diana is assisting our continuing efforts to reach all county residents with our programming.



Marie Stafford was hired as the 4-H Youth Development Assistant in May. She advises 4-H members and leaders on developing, planning, and implementing activities that encourage positive youth development.

Other aspects of Marie's work include collaborating with other youth organizations in the community and reaching out to new audiences. To stay current with the needs of youth, Marie incorporates the 4-H Motto, "To Make the Best Better," into all that she does with youth programming. ■

Another Successful Year for Youth Tractor and Machinery Safety Training and Certification

"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

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. 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. ■



Fall Master Gardener Program Focuses on Wisconsin Native Plant Communities

A four-week educational program focusing on Wisconsin's native plant communities was offered this fall to broaden the knowledge base of Fond du Lac County Master Gardeners and other individuals. Eight different speakers gave presentations dealing with the cultivation and ecology of native prairies, wetlands, and forests. There was also information presented on invasive species and landscape design using native plants. The 45 people who attended the program will now take the information they learned and apply it to their own home situations and/or put their new found knowledge to use in the community. A couple of examples of how participants indicated that they will use the information are presented below:



"We are going to redo landscape areas at my church and the intention is to create a natural area that would invite birds using trees (existing) and add shrubs and plants."

"I definitely learned more ways to manage the prairie we have started on our property." ■

Highlights in Numbers: 2007 Statistics

- 282 Teaching/Educational Events
- 570 Media Contacts
- 9,579 People Reached/Contacts

Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14

Fond du Lac County Department of Social Services and UWEX partnered to bring the evidence based Strengthening Families Program to Fond du Lac County. The SFP curriculum includes three courses (Parent Skills Training, Children's Skills Training and Family Life Skills Training) taught in fourteen two-hour periods. In the first hour, parents and children participate in separate classes, each class led by two co-leaders. Parents learn to increase desired behaviors in children by using attention and rewards, clear communication, effective discipline, substance use education, problem solving, and limit setting. Children learn effective communication, understanding feelings, coping with anger and criticism, stress management, social skills, prob-

lem solving, resisting peer pressure, consequences of substance use, and compliance with parental rules. During the second hour families practice structured family activities, therapeutic child play, family meetings, communication skills, effective discipline, reinforcing positive behaviors in each other, and jointly planning family activities. To date 13 families have completed the six week course. Pre and Post evaluations showed an increased use of skills taught. A comment from one parent clearly summarizes the positive impact of this program: The most valuable thing I learned during this program was "how to relate to a 12 year old, like how to talk to them, listen to them and understand them better." ■

Dairy Modernization Continues - Tiestalls Continue to Disappear

In Fond du Lac County, there are currently 395 farms. Of these 395 farms, 335 are farms that have less than 150 cows. A majority (>85%) of these farms still employ a traditional facility, usually referred to as a tiestall barn. These are the traditional "red" barns that house cows in individual stalls. Each cow is tethered in an individual stall. The dairy producer milks these cows by moving a milk machine from cow to cow (milk is transferred by a pipeline).

Tiestall barns conjure up idealistic images of farm life in rural America. Indeed they have been a staple of farm life for nearly 100 years in Wisconsin. In the last 30 years, however, almost no one has built this type of facility. Tiestalls are labor intensive and less efficient compared to freestall/parlor facilities. They often lead to many health issues for the dairy farmer like knee and hip replacements. And finally the production potential and profit is usually less than newer freestall/parlor operations. An obstacle to converting to newer facilities has been the high capital overhead of newer facilities.

In the fall of 2007, Paul Dyk took a small group of dairy producers to Crawford County, WI. He took this group of producers to six low cost parlors. These are parlors that range from \$4,000 to \$50,000 in cost. These parlors compare favorably to current commercial parlors in the \$100,000 to \$500,000 range. The producers were impressed by the functionality of these parlors and benefits to the producers. Producers had improved health, profitability and efficiency. Follow-up on farm visits were generated to ten farms in Fond du Lac County. In addition, a Modernization program was given in December of 2007. A number of parlors are being planned for construction in 2008. It is hoped that this core of producers will help spur on the final conversion and disappearance of tiestalls in Fond du Lac County. ■



Water Quality

In August of 2007, five families in the Town of Byron discovered wells infected with manure-sourced E. Coli bacteria. UW-Extension began coordinated efforts with DNR, Town of Byron Board of Supervisors, and Fond du Lac County to design a response for the Township. A public meeting gave residents the chance to learn more about why their township is susceptible to contamination and a town-wide water sampling event tested 97 wells. 21% of wells tested were higher than the acceptable health standard in nitrates. 26% of wells sampled tested positive for bacteria. These samples occurred randomly throughout the Town and were not concentrated near the area recently impacted by E. Coli.

UW-Extension has offered Town-wide water testing events for many years. County-wide testing data from 1988-2007 show that 16 out of 21 Townships have had more than 12% of sampled wells test positive for bacterial contamination, and 19 Townships have wells that exceed the safe drinking water standard for nitrates. While the Town of Byron was in the headlines in 2007, water quality is a concern everywhere in the county. Fond du Lac County will be convening a Groundwater Quality Advisory Council facilitated by UW-Extension to study the situation further and make recommendations to the County Board for action in 2008. ■

| Location | Number of Wells Sampled | Positive for Coliform Bacteria | Nitrate Level greater than 2 ppm <i>(more than is naturally occurring)</i> | Nitrate Level greater than 10 ppm <i>(over the federal health standard)</i> |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Town of Byron, Nov. 2007 | 97 | 26% | 71% | 21% |
| Fond du Lac County, 1988-2007 | About 1500 | 19% | 31% | 8% |

Self Esteem Grows at 4-H Camp

Children, teens and adults gather around a campfire, roast marshmallows and sing songs. Daytime activities include swimming, crafts, nature hikes, volleyball, and talent shows. It all happens at 4-H summer camp. Let's take a look at the experience of "Jill", a first time camper. This was also the first time she had been away from home over night. Here she was at a facility 60 miles from home for four days and three nights with nary a friend in sight. Jill was nervous, so much so that she felt sick to her stomach. An experienced 4-H counselor spent extra time with her, helping Jill to become comfortable and feel included. By day two Jill was feeling a bit better, but when it was time to canoe, the uncertainty set in again. She watched others give

it a try, hesitating to get in. With a bit of encouragement and assurance that she could paddle with one of the best canoers, just a short distance, she stepped into the boat. Jill was apprehensive as the canoe glided gently from shore, took a short trip and returned. Together we celebrated Jill's new adventure. Day three brought the biggest surprise. Jill and one of the counselors had been practicing a simple line dance. They performed it in front of 70 campers and counselors at the talent show. Jill beamed, we applauded! Day four brought the end of camp with Jill expressing her enthusiasm to return next year. What a thrill to see a shy young child, with the help of skilled 4-H camp counselors, experience what camp has to offer and to grow in confidence. ■

Nutrition Education

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 the Federal Food Share program. The program housed out of Fond du Lac County also serves Green Lake County.

In fiscal year 2007, 2,055 learners attended one or more WNEP educational events, 75 more contacts than 2006. Almost half (47%) of the participants represented youth ages 5-17, 35% were families with children, 17% were adults without children, and 1% were senior adults. The audience focuses changed this year with more youth reached than families with children. The majority of the participants were women (59%), male participation increased from 37% in 2006 to 41% in 2007. Participants were 73% White, 6% African American, 1% Asian American, 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 18% Hispanic or Latino. The program continues to see an increase in Hispanic/Latino program participants from 9% in 2005 to 14% in 2006 and 18% in 2007.

In 2007, WNEP in Fond du Lac County focused on increasing contacts with potential WNEP learners. In the County, the following were added into the existing educational programming schedule:

- Sisters in Health group made up of Hispanic families meets at the Family Resource Center
- Parents as Teachers (PAT) family events held at the Family Resource Center
- Friendship Corner transitional learning center for individuals associated with Berry House
- A second section of ADVOCAP Fresh Start students has been added
- Boys and Girls Club of Fond du Lac added a second age group
- Added a second monthly food resource management class held at the Fond du Lac Job Center

In addition, 16,891 families with children were reached through newsletters by mail. More information on the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program can be found at: <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu/wnep/>. ■



Rent Smart

Do you know what landlords look for in a renter? Do you know how much you can afford to pay for rent? How do you choose a place to rent; what do you look for? Individuals in Fond du Lac County are learning answers to these and additional questions on renting when they attend the Rent Smart Tenant Education classes. Rent Smart provides practical information to help people find and keep a decent place to live. Rent Smart is designed for individuals who are likely to have trouble securing rental housing.

This tenant education course consists of a series of two three-hour workshops, taught every other month throughout the year. Basic tenant responsibilities are taught by Family Living Educator, Michelle Tidemann, using the UWEX curriculum, "Rent Smart" and coordinated by Advocap Community Development counselors. Eighty-three (83) individuals have participated in 2007 and to date, 24 individuals have participated in 2008. Participants indicated numerous times after completing the sessions, "I will pay closer attention to applications, reading the lease, check-in/checkout and everything else that was taught during Rent Smart."

Participants receive a certificate for completing the program. The Fond du Lac Housing Authority and some landlords recognize this certificate as a positive reference on their housing applications.

The Fond du Lac City Fair Housing Authority continues to fund the printing of the Rent Smart booklet costs.

Rent Smart is an example of how coordination of community resources improves outcomes for families. The goal of Rent Smart is to increase housing stability of individuals with poor rental histories. ■

On-farm Testing and Learning

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. 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. 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. ■



Strengthening Families through Relationship Education

While married couple households in Fond du Lac County have decreased from 88.3% 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. The health of marriage and couple relationships today cannot be taken for granted. When committed couple relationships are dissolved, both children and parents experience a range of negative consequences, from a decrease in economic status, to absent or limited contact with one parent, to family conflict, stress, and ultimately compromises in physical and emotional functioning (Amato & Keith, 1991). Divorce is not the only path to negative consequences for families. Couple relationships characterized by negativity and conflict

have been demonstrated to result in unhealthy physiological reactivity for the partners (Kiecolt-Glaser et al) as well as for children who experience their parents' arguments (Cummings & Davies, 1994). Ignoring the health of couple relationships represents a significant cost to communities and society.

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). ■



County 4-H Mission Defined

Early in 2007 Fond du Lac County 4-H Adult Leaders Association Executive Board began a process to clarify the county 4-H program mission. It began by asking 4-H members and leaders to respond to the question, "What does 4-H mean to me?" 4-H clubs were asked to have these conversations and to report their answers back to the Board.

Common responses from youth and adults included: 4-H means.... New experiences and challenges; Projects such as archery, crafts, animals, knitting, rockets, and health; Learning by doing; Self improvement; Activities such as speeches, basketball, the fair, club of-

ices, games, meetings, and camp; New & diverse people; Families are included; Multi-generational efforts; Community service; Supportive adult role models; Preparing for the future; Developing life skills such as self confidence, leadership, record keeping, responsibility, and respect; Belonging and acceptance; Fun; Food; and Teaching values.

These responses were shared at a Leader Association meeting where the discussion then focused on identifying the strengths of 4-H and the opportunities that we might grasp.



All of this information was then used by the Executive Board to draft a mission statement which was presented and approved at the annual meeting. The mission statement is our commitment to all of the communities we serve in Fond du Lac County; it's about the difference we make. It states, **Fond du Lac County 4-H: Enriching youth, families, and communities through citizenship, leadership and life skill experiences.** As we move into 2008 we will look at what new programs might be undertaken or what new audiences may be reached in fulfilling this mission. ■

Dairy Partner / El Companero Newsletter

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 herdsman 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 was 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. ■

Community Garden

The Community Garden is located on ten acres of Fond du Lac County Airport property at the corner of Pioneer Road and Grove Street. In 2007 there were 112 gardener families (71% White, 27% Hmong, 1.7% Hispanic) using 161 plots. ■

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University of Wisconsin-Extension, United States Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin Counties cooperating.

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