



Lincoln County Cooperative Extension

Bringing University of Wisconsin knowledge and resources to where people need them most – where they live and work.

The Lincoln County Cooperative Extension Office is one of 72 county offices statewide, staffed by professional educators. We offer educational programs through four program areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources; Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development; Family Living; and 4-H Youth Development. The faculty and staff of the Lincoln County UW-Extension office meet educational needs of county residents by:

- Identifying and responding to local needs
- Strengthening communities to meet challenges
- Helping families to thrive in a rapidly changing world
- Working with farmers to improve production efficiency while preserving natural resources
- Empowering youth through development of leadership and life skills

Planning to Meet Local Needs

Every four years the University of Wisconsin-Extension across the State of Wisconsin conducts an extensive planning process to identify issues that the residents in the various counties feel need to be addressed. The results of that planning process not only help guide local planning efforts, they are combined with data from other county Extension offices in an attempt to identify common issues that need to be addressed on a statewide basis.

Lincoln County UW-Extension staff utilized a variety of stakeholder groups and data collection methods in assessing the needs of the county. In determining the needs for 2004-06, staff utilized the results of the county comprehensive planning process that involved over 5000 youth and adult community residents, elected and appointed officials; Lincoln County government strategic planning process information; surveys conducted in both Merrill and Tomahawk school districts; results from the Conversations on Youth Development for the 21st Century; Parenting Task Force needs assessment data; and the Healthy Community Initiative Town Hall Meetings. In addition, demographic data such as the Census and Public School Enrollment data were utilized to monitor changes in the county's demographic composition.

Four Major Issues Identified

Based on the community concerns, the Lincoln County University of Wisconsin faculty and staff identified the four major issue areas that they would be addressing from 2004 to 2006.

1. Building community capacity for meeting the needs of families.
2. Developing positive youth opportunities through community collaborations.
3. Economic development appropriate for the county's resources and character.
4. Provide programs that empower youth and build leadership capabilities of youth and adults.

Although faculty and staff have identified the four program priorities, they remain flexible to address emerging needs as requested. Areas that have emerged since the planning process will be included in this report under "Emerging Needs/Requests".

1. *Building community capacity for meeting the needs of families.*

- **Nutrition and food security.** Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) educators made 1,791 teaching contacts during 2006 reaching 1,219 different learners. Thirty nine percent were youth, 34% were families with young children, 26% older adults, and 1% adults without children. This program focuses on providing practical, research-based education on a variety of topics related to food, nutrition, food budgeting, and food security issues to individuals of limited financial resources.
- **Making healthy choices.** WNEP Educators taught 122 adults with children and older adults about the importance of paying attention to the amount of food they need from each food group using the “Stepping Up To A Healthy Lifestyle” educational materials. The learners were taught at WIC sites and at senior meal sites using learn-while-you-wait and one-time group lessons. After the lesson 60% of the learners said “Yes” they intended to pay attention to the amount of food they need from each food group, 33% of the learners said “Yes, sometimes”, they would pay attention to the amount of food they need from each food group, and 7% of the learners said “No” they would not pay attention to the amount of food they need from each food group.
- **2010 Health Department planning process for future.** Family Living Educator was part of this planning process for the Health Department, in relation to the Social norms project and ATOD (alcohol, tobacco and other drugs) efforts with the community coalition. Prescription drug abuse/theft and disposal was one issue that came out of the process. Family Living Educator will share information and other resources regarding another counties efforts in this area in 2007.
- **Financial education for referred individuals/couples.** In cooperation with Probation and Parole, the Judicial group, and Social Services referrals, the 4 part series “Spending Plan Basics: Where Does the Money Go?” was taught in 2006 with 22 people referred (note that some of these are duplicates as they had to repeat, or missed the series due to various reasons) and 14 actually completing the series. The Family Living Educator taught 3 of the sessions, with the WNEP educator teaching the fourth session related to food and money. Some of the topics covered in the Family Living Educators sessions included: tracking expenses/spending; identifying income, expenses and debt; identifying seasonal and occasional expenses; drafting a spending plan; identifying what the sources of difficulty/challenges are for those attending the series; and spending choices and decisions based on available money resources. A brief evaluation was completed by individuals who completed the series. The majority of those responding indicated improvement of: keeping track of their spending, their spending plan, saving money, and increased ability to pay off debts.
- **Financial Toolbox.** The Family Living Educator taught this program at a weekend professional improvement for Central Wisconsin school staff in 2006, as well as teachers from across the state during the summer Financial Education seminar. Resources compiled on a website by Family Living Educator and others were shared with great evaluation results.
- **Protecting your identity.** Family Living Educator taught the program “Identity Theft”, reaching 75 people in 2006 directly thru programs taught to various audiences, including thirty-two school staff from the Central Wisconsin area and the District 3 Wisconsin Associated County Extension Committee (WACEC) Annual Meeting attended by Lincoln County Board members currently serving on Extension committees. In addition, a news article was written that was utilized in numerous counties throughout the state, as well as being used as a handout. One financial institution called and requested permission to use it in their newsletter as well. As a result of the WACEC Annual Meeting presentation, the UW-Extension administrators in attendance took action and removed the requirement for employees to submit social security numbers on their expense forms that are sent in through the mail or faxed to UW Extension. This statewide/system change affects hundreds of employees personal information safety.
- **Financial Education through the media.** As a new partner in the Channel 12 TV spot, Money Watch, the Family Living Educator prepared two segments related to financial education. One focused on spending leaks and how to find more money for your pocket. The second related to what to do if your income is reduced, due to a job loss or some other factor. Materials on the second topic were also prepared and shared with the Merrill Chamber at the time of job/plant closings in Merrill. The same topic was also shared via the local newspaper and radio as well. Channel 7 requested a TV interview/spot related to seasonal and occasional expenses, following a column in the local newspaper. This interview/spot has been shown multiple times, including during a morning when school was cancelled and there were many viewers.

- **Living Wills/Advanced Directives.** The Family Living Educator taught a program on this topic to Home and Community Education (HCE) members/guests. The group especially valued the portion of the program related to recordkeeping according to a brief evaluation following the program.
- **Everyday Creativity.** A leadership program that discussed how we view people and the world at large...was taught for HCE members by the Family Living Educator.
- **Transferring personal property.** “Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate” was taught by the Family Living Educator for a Tomahawk group of 20 people, as well as a radio program. The issue of passing on personal property is often assumed to be unimportant or an issue that just takes care of itself. The experiences of family members and attorneys suggest otherwise. Decisions about personal belongings - also known as non-titled property - are often more challenging than decisions about titled property or financial wealth and may lead to family disagreements. Decision-making becomes more challenging and sensitive when people are grieving, selling the home they grew up in, or facing the increased dependence of an elder. When there is no will, or no separate listing identifying the wishes of the property owner, family members are left with many dilemmas and decisions regarding the passing on of personal possessions.
- **Parenting resources.** In partnership with the Lincoln County Health Department and Merrill Area Public Schools, “Parenting the First Year”, “Parenting the Second Year” and “Parenting the Third Year” newsletters were distributed to an average of 507 Lincoln County families per month in 2006. Through these monthly newsletters, parents are provided with current and reliable parenting and child development information related to the monthly age of their child. Past evaluations have proven this resource to be a method contributing to preventative education.
- **Lincoln County Home and Community Education (HCE) Community Outreach.** HCE has been affiliated with UW Extension for over 60 years. They have a strong relationship with UW Extension and the collaborative efforts to provide family living programs throughout the county. HCE has been involved with the Wisconsin Bookworms reading program (formerly First Book) for the past 10 years. In the 2006-2007 school year, 58 volunteers are reading to approximately 200 children in Tomahawk and Merrill Head Start and Parkside Daycare programs. The volunteers read a book and work an activity sheet each month with the children. The children then take the book home to share with their family. This program helps these children to be more prepared and ready to learn when they go to kindergarten. In addition to this program HCE is involved in making and distributing “walker bags” and “wheel chair caddies”, for Pinecrest Nursing Home, and local assisted living homes in the county. In the past years they have made and distributed over 160 walker bags, 175 wheel chair caddies, and nine sand bag weights. HCE also supports our youth with two \$500.00 scholarships given to worthy county high school students. UW Extension Family Living Educator, Brenda Janke, serves as the HCE advisor and presents many educational programs throughout the year to this group.
- **Family and youth services.** The 4-H Youth Development Agent continues to provide leadership for the Lincoln County Family and Youth Resource Directory (www.linc-on.com). The mission of this directory is to provide residents and professionals with a centralized information source of family and youth resources/services available. During 2006, we were involved in conversations about the statewide 211 system and providing this service to Lincoln County residents with the director of the Merrill Area United Way, area 211 providers from Marathon County United Way and Northwoods Family Resource Center. A statewide business plan has been developed to implement this statewide system where people could call 211 for access to community information and referral services. Currently, when a Lincoln County resident calls 211 they are referred to the Lincoln County Family and Youth Resource Directory website. For individuals without internet access and even those with access, this may not provide the information and assistance they require. The Family and Youth Resource Directory could serve as a good starting data base for an effective 211 system but would need to be enhanced and put into the 211 data base software for use by the individual answering the 211 call. This information is being brought to the County Human Services Group to discuss strategies for implementing an effective 211 system for the county over the next couple of years.

2. *Developing positive youth opportunities through community collaborations.*

- **Teen Court Steering Committee.** Seventeen youth and adults from various agencies and schools have continued to work together with the help of UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor to oversee, evaluate and direct the progress of the Lincoln County Teen Court Program. Teen Court offers

eligible youth an opportunity to take responsibility for their actions. It provides positive peer pressure with community based consequences. Individuals involved on the Teen Court Steering Committee gain insight and decision-making skills while giving other youth within the county a tool to learn decision making skills, are involved in their judicial system, and engaged in their community. Through a partnership with the Social Services Department, 4-H Youth Development staff secured \$15,000 for 2006 through a Wisconsin Department of Corrections Early Intervention grant.

- **Learning from mistake.** Eight youth respondents from the Teen Court program were offered an array of sanction classes to educate them in making better decisions and learn from their mistakes. The 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor serves as the coordinator for Teen Court. As the coordinator, we secured the use of already established programs and partnered with organization to create and teach the new “Success Skills Program”. In addition, respondents also wrote essays, apology letters and completed community service hours as restitution for the offense they committed. None of the youth that successfully completed their Teen Court sanctions has been cited for any offense since they agreed to participate in Lincoln County Teen Court.
- **4-H Ambassadors.** Twelve 4-H Ambassadors increased their decision-making, problem-solving, planning and communication skills by extending 4-H educational resources to underserved audiences by partnering with local after school programs with the assistance of UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor. In addition, 4-H Ambassadors promoted 4-H opportunities to youth and families throughout Lincoln County at the After School program in Merrill, Lighted Schoolhouse programs in Merrill and Tomahawk, Trinity Family Festival, during local radio programs, and during the county fair.
- **4-H Day Camp.** 4-H Day Camp was conducted for 4-H and community youth between the grades of Kindergarten through 3rd grade with assistance of 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor . This event serves to promote overnight camp to younger youth and prepare them for overnight camp in the future. It is also a valuable learning experience for youth as an educational program. Thirteen youth, 4 adult volunteers, and 5 older youth counselors participated in the event. The older youth planned the day’s events and lead the campers in the activities that day from 4-H project based/experiential learning curriculum.
- **4-H Summer Camp.** With training and support from the 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor, seven older youth counselors planned the 4-day summer camp program to provide campers opportunities to build on their life skills, while having fun in a safe environment. Participants stayed in cabins and participated in a variety of activities. All the activities were led by older 4-H youth with guidance from adults. Twenty-three campers, 7 counselors and 4 adults from Lincoln County participated in the camp program this year. Seven of the campers whom indicated that funding was not available to cover the registration fee were granted camperships to attend camp through a grant available by the Lincoln County Safe and Stable Families Grant. In the evaluation the campers reported many project skills and interpersonal skills gained during the camp experience. Camp counselors reported an increase in their ability to handle pressure and conflict, a development of their leadership skills, and found that they related to youth better. They also indicated an increase of organizational skills, confidence, learning about different leadership styles and speaking. When asked what was most useful, the counselors indicated that the focus on planning, discussion of conflict management, and behavior issues were the most useful.
- **Importance of Savings.** Family Living Educator taught ten middle school students participating in the “After the Bell” program the basics about savings/investing...and how we accumulate money vs. go overspend and go into debt.
- **4-H participation.** 4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. During 2006, 1,258 youth participated in the community 4-H club program, after-school programs, special interest programs, or school enrichment programs. 4-H Youth Development staff provide leadership for this program by training adult and older youth volunteers, serving as advisors to committees and boards, providing resources to clubs and assisting with organization of educational opportunities offered.
- **Community service.** Wisconsin 4-H Clubs conduct an average of five community service projects per year per club. Locally, this translated into approximately 80 community service projects done in 2006 by 16 4-H clubs in Lincoln County. One of these 4-H clubs applied for and received \$500 in a grant from the Safe and Stable Families Grant through the Lincoln County Department of Social Services. Young

people are involved in every step of these service projects from identifying the need, securing necessary resources, planning and conducting the project, and sharing the outcomes with the community. In addition to feeling a part of their community, young people are gaining leadership, communication and decision-making skills.

- **Making a Difference.** The 4-H Youth Development Agent collaborated with local community initiative to plan and implement the 11th Annual Make a Difference Day. During this event, 82 adults and 335 youth completed over 45 projects for elderly and disabled residents. As a result of participating in events such as this, young people developed a sense of being connected to their community and that they can make a difference.
- **“After the Bell” program for Middle School Students.** Through leadership provided by the 4-H Youth Development Agent, the “After the Bell” Steering Committee composed of both middle school youth and adults from various agencies/segments of the community continued to provide direction and support for this much needed after school program held at the Prairie River Middle School (PRMS). The program operates Monday through Thursday from right after school until 5 p.m. on the days school is in session. During the 2005-06 school year, 110 different youth participated in this program with an average of 20 students each day. Forty-four of these students took part in the “After the Bell Plus” tutoring program where 13 teachers served as tutors. In addition, 29 high school students volunteered during the year to assist with tutoring and/or the enrichment activities. Eight parents/guardians were trained and served as supervisors for the program during the year. Post-program evaluations received from participants, parents/guardians and teacher indicated that participants felt a sense of belonging, provided them with opportunities to learn new skills, develop more independence and allowed them to participate in service to others. Comments from parents/guardians included, “Thank you for all you do to make “After the Bell” enjoyable for kids. It’s the most difficult time of day for kids. They’re tired, hungry and antsy. You provide for their needs in a positive way.” Some comments from staff included, “The After the Bell program has caught a few of our students that could otherwise, very easily have fallen through the proverbial “crack”. Not having anyone at home to involve them in worthwhile, fun and engaging activities, those student are having a crucial need fulfilled. More importantly, you have provided the “PLUS” to the After the Bell this year. Students who had very little support academically are coming with homework completed. I even have a student who has labeled himself the “Come Back Kid”, as now he is getting his work done on time.” (7th Grade Teacher) “The PRMS After the Bell program is one of the best after school programs I have ever seen in operation. The students just love it! It has been growing by leaps and bounds! Our own staff tutor the students and have made unbelievable bonds! Kudos to Lincoln County Extension service for the vision to make this happen for our kids!” (Principal during 2005-06 School Year) The \$7,600 required to operate the 2005-06 “After the Bell” enrichment program was received through donations from various community businesses, organizations, and grants, including the Safe and Stable Families grant through the Department of Social Services. In addition, the Merrill School District provided an additional \$21,000 through an after school tutoring grant the district received for adding the “After the Bell Plus” tutoring program. To operate the 2006-07 program, the steering committee has successfully raised \$7,500 of the \$7,900 needed to operate the enrichment program. The school district has again provided \$17,010 from their grant to operate the tutoring component for 2006-07. From September through December for the 2006-07 school year, 67 different youth have participated in the program with an average of 16 youth each day. The “After the Bell” program was asked to be a part of the “Gallery Walk” featuring after school program from across the state during the February 2, 2006 Governor’s Summit on After School Programs held in Madison.
- **“After the Bell” Summer Edition.** Young people involved on the “After the Bell” Steering committee identified the need for positive summer opportunities targeted at middle school age students. Based on the results of a summer needs survey conducted by the 4-H Youth Development agent, the committee decided to partner with the Merrill School District to offer an “After the Bell – Summer Edition”. This program was offered from 9 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from June 13th to July 27th to correspond with other summer school programs offered by the school district. Fifteen different youth participated an average of 6 days out of 15 days. The summer program was similar to the program offered after school with enrichment program for students to take part in, a snack and an hour where students were able to choose enrichment activities. This summer program continued to provide a safe environment with positive role models where young people are learning new skills.

- **Training Other After School Program Staff.** As a result of the growing number of requests the 4-H Youth Development staff are receiving to provide after school programming applied for and received an \$800 grant to provide training for staff involved in providing after school and before school programs in the area. A two-hour training session was taught for staff and other school/community members interested in beginning an after school program or who are involved in an existing program. Seven adults attended from Tomahawk Schools, Washington Elementary School, Prairie River Middle School and the Athens School District. During this training, participants learned about the essential elements to include in their programs to create positive youth development opportunities, shared easy-to-use program resources and ideas for handling challenging behaviors that may occur. In post-training evaluations, participants indicated that as a result of participating in the training they have improved their ability to provide high quality hands on experiences for youth, saw the value of UW-Extension's role in after school programs, learned how to strengthen local partnerships focused on supporting high quality after school programs, and ways to ensure programs are of high quality. As a result of requests at the training, an e-mail distribution list composed of participants at the training has been initiated by 4-H Youth Development Agent to share additional resources and information on after school programs as it becomes available. A second two-hour training was held with the 4-H Ambassadors to train them to lead the character education program, "Boomerang", and 4-H project activities during after and before school programs. As a result of the training, 4-H Ambassadors began conducting character education programs and other 4-H project activities at each of the elementary and middle school after school and before school programs in the county.
- **Providing safety education.** The 4-H Youth Development Agent partnered with the Safety Day Camp committee to conduct the 12th Annual Safety Day Camp. This event is open to all youth in Lincoln County in 3rd and 4th grades and is free. Sixty-eight youth learned about staying safe around electricity, guns, lawnmowers, riding ATV's, risks of smoking, personal/internet safety, large animal safety, kitchen safety (taught by this agent) and fire safety. Participants also received an updated Safety Day Activity Booklet designed by the 4-H Youth Development Agent to reinforce the information that participants learned during the event and provide them with activities they can complete with a parent/guardian at home.
- **Social norms marketing.** In collaboration with Merrill Public School staff involved with the Drug-Free Communities Support Program grant, the 4-H Youth Development Agent and Family Living Educator continue to assist with organizing and facilitating the "Drug-Free Communities" Coalition and the Social Norms subcommittee. This coalition and committee is composed of representation from law enforcement, schools, county health department, county social services, local hospital emergency personnel, county health care facility, and other community coalition representatives. Grant funds are being utilized to increase the Family Living Educator position by 25% time and fund additional time for the 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor position to take on some responsibilities of the 4-H Youth Development Agent to focus on the development of a Social Norms Marketing project in the Merrill area. Social norms marketing is based on the central concept of social norms theory – that much of people's behavior is influenced by their perceptions of what is "normal" or "typical". The problem is that we often severely misperceive the typical behaviors or attitudes of our peers. During the fall of 2006, the social norms subcommittee adapted social norms surveys for students, parent/guardians and school staff through a collaboration with Northern Illinois University. Support was secured from the School Superintendent and School Board to conduct the survey in early 2007 and to begin the social norms marketing project to share the results of the survey in an effort to change the student, parent, staff and community perception of usage to be more accurate, thereby decreasing age of onset and usage overall.

3. *Economic development appropriate for the county's resources and character.*

- **NxLevel Business Planning Course.** In November 2006, 12 students graduated from the Community Development Educator's third NxLevel Business Planning Course. Besides designing the course curriculum based on the NxLevel business plan template, the educator taught five classes and arranged for guest speakers to teach portions of the other sessions. Topics presented over the 8-week course included preparing cash flow statements, setting business goals, business plan writing techniques, researching target markets, budgeting, and marketing. Evaluation results show that students learned a great deal and were pleased with the course. By early 2007, four of the students (including a family of four) had completed acceptable business plans.

- **Business Plan Counseling.** The Community Development Educator continued to advise individuals on business start-up issues and in most cases helped these people write business plans. Some of these entrepreneurs graduated from the NxLevel Business Planning Course. Others made cold calls to the educator seeking advice. Counseling was provided in person, via e-mail, and by phone. One entrepreneur for whom the educator wrote a business plan received a grant of nearly \$108,000 from the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation to purchase equipment. The equipment will allow him, despite his disability, to operate a firewood processing and supply business.
- **Youth Entrepreneurship.** Members of 4-H and their parents partnered with Extension's 4-H Youth Development Agent and Community Development Educator to establish and administer the third annual "4-H Youth Marketplace" at the Lincoln County Fair. During five educational sessions taught by the agent and educator, the 13 youth participants learned about effective entrepreneurial strategies, customer service, setting business goals, basic marketing techniques, pricing, business record keeping, setting appropriate hours, and other start-up and business operations topics. Sessions were filled with highly interactive and fun learning exercises. The marketplace was open throughout the fair with each youth participant working assigned shifts. Although most participants made a profit, evaluation results demonstrate that they all learned much from the experience.
- **Tomahawk Retail Projects Series.** In early 2006, the Community Development Educator and Tomahawk Chamber developed a questionnaire to provide valuable information about the Tomahawk shopping experience to retailers and Chamber members working to strengthen the city's emerging "shop local" initiative. Results showed that 52% of respondents shop five times or less per month in local stores. They also revealed that respondents spend 10% or less of their total shopping dollars in Tomahawk. The data reinforced the need for a comprehensive "shop local" campaign. The need for such a campaign became even more evident after an analysis of information garnered from focus groups designed and conducted by the Community Development Educator. Participant comments (youth and adult) did more to help reveal why many locals choose not to shop in Tomahawk. A participant also suggested a brand slogan for the city's retail sector ("Try Tomahawk First") that was adopted by the Chamber for the "shop local" campaign. Data compiled by the Community Development Educator from the projects he designed and conducted was published at various times by the Tomahawk Leader newspaper as a way to educate folks about the true state of the city's retail sector. In the words of the Chamber director, 'the result of this research and [subsequent discussions about it] was the unveiling of our "shop local" campaign. And, it's working. We've created discussions and debates with our community, we've been working with business owners on how to best compete in today's changing retail economy, and have heard personal stories from many business owners ... who have had new people shop in their stores based on [the] campaign.' (Source: Chamber Director's speech, Chamber Annual Banquet).
- **Improving milk quality and profitability.** Two Lincoln County dairy farmers improved their operational efficiency, milk quality and profitability by taking part in an Extension led effort called the "Milk Money Program". Local agents are given a set of resource materials that they use to work a dairy farm through an analysis of their milking operation to see how they could improve milk quality and thus the price they get for their milk. The program pulls together a team of the farm's management, workers and everyone who works with the farm; such as the milk plant, milking equipment company, nutritionist and veterinarian. The program not only helps improve the farms' bottom line, they also learned how to effectively utilize a management team approach. The program also teaches farm operators how to use teams of professionals to make key management changes.
- **Grazing education.** Over 225 area farmers attended 7 pasture walks on local farms. Another 90 farmers took part in field trips to three grazing based farms in Wisconsin. Surveys have shown that the pasture walks have been an important tool in helping farmers adapt new farming systems and attendance has consistently increased. There are several possible reasons for the increase; first, there is an increase in grazing based farms in the area; second, three of the walks were held at times that were easier for part time farmers to attend; and third, for the dairy related walks specific topics were chosen for each walk, such as weed control and pasture fertility.
- **Agribusiness development.** The Agribusiness Incubator Project accomplished several of its goals in 2006. One was successful establishment of a second incubator farm on a managed grazing farm. This project has been a team effort in working with several farmers in the area and Land Conservation staff in Lincoln and Marathon Counties. The model that is being used is a first in setting up an incubator farm, a Limited Liability Company (LLC). The LLC model has taken some time to develop because of

it's uniqueness to our Federal partners. This model and the lease model used in an earlier incubator farm provide at least two formal agreements that potential incubator type farms can choose from. Both model agreements are available at either a new website, <http://www.ucanfarm.org>, which was created to provide resources for new farmers, or the UW-Extension website at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/marathon/ag/agincubator.html>.

- **Sustainable farming systems.** Approximately 100 students from the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources attended classes on sustainable farming systems taught by Lincoln County Extension at the Lincoln County dairy farm of Mike and Jill Braunel. The Braunel Farm has hosted these classes for seven years. The classes focus on the environmental and financial sustainability of grazing based dairy systems.
- **Using Distance Education to Reach New Audiences for UW Agriculture Degree Programs.** The Lincoln County Extension Office has been leading the development of the first offering of a UW-Madison College of Agriculture and Life Sciences course for credit towards an undergraduate degree to a local audience. The eleven year old Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy Farmers (WSBDF), offered through the Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CAL S) at the UW-Madison campus, has acted as a catalyst for offering CALS degree/certificate credit courses to farmers Lincoln County, around Wisconsin and perhaps beyond; farmers who would never have taken the course in Madison. Using the distance education (DE) resources of UW-Extension, 27 traditional FISC students taking the class in Madison have been connected with 8 students at the UW-Marathon County campus in Wausau and 7 at the Madison Area Technical College (MATC) campus in Reedsburg. The DE sites have attracted diverse students as well. They range in age from a high school senior, wanting to get a head start on college, to mid-career farmers changing from conventional to grazing based operations. There is an even mix of men and women and even a Mennonite family. Two students are taking the course for credit, a first for FISC, and the rest are taking it as a certificate program. At the UW-Marathon County site there are four Lincoln County students and four Marathon County students. In an evaluation at the end of the first term, students were asked: "What are a couple of things that speakers shared from their experiences in life that sparked your imagination, taught or challenged you?" Two responses were very rewarding: "Maybe it's just me, but I've concluded that the passion for learning needs to be stirred up every so often. It's great to see the passion in all of the speakers, and willingness to help others succeed." And "I guess the thing that is sticking with me the most is that goals change and that is okay. I always felt goals were concrete but they should be flexible. So far the classes are very enjoyable and I feel very worthwhile. I'm glad I am taking them."

4. *Provide programs that empower youth and build leadership capabilities of youth and adults.*

- **Teen Court.** Trained by UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor, thirty two youth grades 6-12 from both Tomahawk and Merrill who applied to serve as Teen Court Panel members learned communication and life skills, and gained responsibility and community pride while doing a service for their community. Four youthful respondents were held accountable by their peers for first time offences in a healthy restorative environment. They were given a chance to learn from their mistakes to redeem themselves, repair relationships, and contribute to their community by completing sanctions imposed by a panel of their peers.
- **Leadership training.** Older youth were provided with numerous opportunities to develop and enhance their leadership capabilities through 4-H. These included, leading county and club project meetings/trainings, coordinating countywide communication arts festivals, planning and leading summer camps, chairing or co-chairing fair departments, members of county project committees, serving as 4-H Ambassadors, members of the 4-H Board of Directors and the "Youth As Partners in Civic Leadership" national and local initiative. In addition to leadership skills, older youth are also enhancing their communication, decision-making and problem-solving skills. Through all of these experiences, older youth are guided and supported by 4-H Youth Development staff and/or adult volunteers.
- **Adult 4-H volunteers.** 4-H adult volunteers (160) received resources and training from 4-H Youth Development staff through face-to-face trainings, one-on-one consultations, satellite programs and newsletters in 2006. These adult volunteers carry out the roles of club organizational leaders, project leaders, and activity leaders to supplement the work of Extension professionals in providing educational opportunities for over 1,250 young people throughout Lincoln County. The typical 4-H volunteer

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contributes 7.9 hours a month. With a conservative value of \$6 per hour, that volunteer service is worth \$91,008 to Lincoln County.

- **Focus on government.** 4-H provides youth direct experience with democratic practices and electoral processes. In 2006, about 80 Lincoln County 4-H youth were elected to offices in the 16 local 4-H clubs. UW-Extension professionals work with adult volunteers to provide club officers with training and resources to carry out their roles. Through these experiences, young people gain experience conducting meetings and leading group decision-making processes. They learn that accountability comes with being elected to office. In 4-H, youth begin developing skills they need to be future community leaders.
- **Youth-Adult Partnerships.** The Lincoln County 4-H Board of Directors was selected to participate in a UW-Extension research study during 2006 of three youth-adult partnerships being supported by Wisconsin Extension to learn more about how groups are effective in making the transition from adult governance to youth-adult partnerships in governance. In the “Summary of Findings” from the researcher, they indicated that the youth-adult partnership (Y-AP) present on the 4-H Board is in a sustainability stage, where both youth and adult participants express a high level of understanding of Y-AP and satisfaction with the practice. They went on to indicate that stakeholders seem to own the practice as an integral part of how the board operates, and adult volunteers are ready to advocate for Y-AP within the organization and the broader community. The report indicated that staff has provided various types of “behind the scenes” support throughout this process, with an on-going emphasis on reflection and evaluation activities. Staff are described as role models who gently guide adult and youth board members, while providing valuable resources and assistance to community partners. The 4-H Youth Development Agent is part of a team of professionals involved in supporting Y-AP who are sharing the implications of what was learned during this research study with other youth development professionals through the country. This included a workshop at the November 2006 National 4-H Youth Development Professionals Conference.
- **Working with others.** During 2006, the 4-H Youth Development Agent facilitated the “Colors Spoken Here – Real Colors” session for 47 youth and 10 adults. “Real Colors” is a process that helps participants understand their own personality style and the styles of others. As a result of this understanding, participants discover ways to more effectively involve, teach and interact with other people. Post-session survey results indicated that participants felt the training helped them understand their own temperament and preferred work style, appreciate the differences in temperament and work styles of their co-workers/peers; and would help them work more effectively with workplace teams, community groups and family members.
- **“7 Habits of Highly Effective People” Courses.** Twenty (20) students graduated from two courses taught by the educator in 2006. Students learned about the 7 Habits and how to practice them in the effort to increase personal and professional effectiveness. The Community Development Educator became a certified 7 Habits instructor in March 2005.
- **Leadership Lincoln County.** Leadership Lincoln County, a new training program designed by a steering committee of community stakeholders and spearheaded by the Community Development educator, began in September 2006. The program’s mission is to help existing and emerging leaders develop leadership skills. During the latter part of the year, 10 program participants toured Tomahawk and Merrill businesses, learned about economic development related trends and challenges in the county, were trained in public speaking, took a personality assessment called “Colors,” networked with one another, and learned about county demographic trends. Six more sessions of the program are scheduled for 2007.

Emerging Needs/Requests.

- **Ad Hoc Study Committee on Administrative Structure.** At the request of the County Board, the Community Development Educator guided a special ad hoc committee of the Board as it discussed how to centralize decision making authority in the Administrative Coordinator’s office, effectively restructuring the way Lincoln County government functions. A major part of the educator’s task was to create and facilitate a process whereby the committee significantly revised the Administrative Coordinator’s job description. The educator also led the committee through a discussion about whether the position title should be changed to County Administrator. Additionally, the educator completed an 80 page report outlining the committee’s discussion and actions. The report is scheduled to be submitted to the County Board in early to mid 2007.

- **Commission on Aging Strategic Planning Project.** At the request of the county's Commission on Aging, the Community Development Educator designed and led representatives from nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government agencies in a nine session strategic planning initiative. During the process, planning team members examined how the entities they represent can combine their limited resources to serve in the coming years Lincoln County's rapidly aging population at or above current levels. Group members also discussed how various other issues related to a rapidly aging population and increasing baby boomer retirements will affect the local labor market and health care insurance plans. An action plan was created to address the group's immediate concerns over the next two to three years. As a result of the planning process, a new organization called the Aging Population Coalition was established. Its primary task is to implement the plan's goals. In order to help the coalition meet its primary goal of educating the public about demographic realities, the Community Development Educator developed a demographics presentation highlighting aging population trends. He began presenting the information to various stakeholder groups in early 2007.
- **County Board Goal Setting.** At the request of the county's Administrative Coordinator, the Community Development Educator designed and facilitated a goal setting and planning session for the County Board. During the meeting, the educator modified the discussion to get the Board to think about its overall vision for the next two years. The Board created broad priority statements which were: "[solve] building project/space issues; [maintain] fiscal responsibility; [conduct] positive promotion of Board and County; promote teamwork within the County Board."
- **Reaching Out to Diverse Populations.** As secretary of the Comunidad Hispana Board of Directors, the Community Development Educator helped teach Latino members about organizational matters and Board procedures, provided organizational development advice, wrote meeting minutes, facilitated Board meetings, and developed the organization's budget for its Catholic Campaign for Human Development (organization's primary source of funding) grant renewal proposal.
- **Engaging Town, County, State and Federal Government Officials in Planning for an Animal Disease Emergency.** In 2006 over 170 city, town, county, state and federal officials gained a better appreciation of the cross jurisdictional coordination and planning that needs to be done to prepare for and react to an animal disease emergency. After a general education program on animal diseases that may require a cross-jurisdictional emergency response and how that response would be handled, the Ag Development Agent led fifty city, town, county, state and federal officials in Lincoln and Marathon Counties through the process of identifying areas where cross-jurisdictional cooperation needs to be improved. The work of Lincoln County Extension to bring together state and federal expertise to help the communities better prepare them for an agricultural emergency began as a result of a training that was done at the 2005 Agriculture and Natural Resource Educators conference. After that conference Lincoln and Marathon County Emergency Management Directors were contacted and a local team was established to begin planning a series of educational efforts for 2006. On April 10th the Lincoln and Marathon County Emergency Management Offices and Extension, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (WDATCP) Emergency Planning staff, and USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS) veterinarians held a seminar at the UW-Marathon County campus for local emergency service providers on "Responding to and Animal Disease Emergency". Although we only had 18 people attend we did have a good cross-section of local officials and responders from both counties. The seminar evaluations were very positive and we were able to get some very good information to develop a more formal training exercise on June 13th. At the June 13th workshop thirty-two people representing town and county government, sheriff and police departments, state patrol and a variety of state, county and federal agencies were led through a table top exercise by the Ag Development Agent, a staff member from the WDATCP Emergency Planning Team and a USDA-APHIS veterinarian. The topic for the table top exercise was a fictional Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in an area that would affect both counties and the cities of Wausau and Merrill. This stimulated quite a bit of discussion on what resources would be needed to handle the situation. And although both counties have considerable resources available, it was obvious that more planning needs to be done in order to have those resources readily available in response to a disaster.
- **Wisline Teleconference and Satellites.** The Lincoln County UW-Extension office serves as a link for county residents to state and national training opportunities through the Wisline teleconference and satellite systems. During 2006, county residents participated in fifty-five Wisline teleconferences and two satellite programs.