

As part of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, we provide knowledge and resources to engage people and their communities in positive change 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

Based on information gathered from various sources, Lincoln County University of Wisconsin faculty and staff continue to focus 2008 programming efforts to address the four major issue areas identified during the 2004-2008 planning process.

1. Building community and organizational capacity for meeting the needs of county residents.
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. Programming efforts in each area for 2008 are outlined beginning on page 2 of this report.

Telephone Survey Helps UW-Extension Serve Community Better

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Central District contracted with the Community Research Center (CRC) at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point to conduct community survey's in each of the fourteen counties where the Central District operates. The surveys were part of an overall Program Planning/Strategic Planning Process undertaken by the Central District. During the months of September through November, 2007, the Center made calls to 3,535 randomly selected households in the fourteen county area. Lincoln County's survey was conducted in late November with 255 households. Demographic information of respondents was collected which included age, income, geographic location and gender. The researchers feel for a phone survey, a reasonable distribution and excellent total numbers in each demographic participated in survey. As typical in phone surveys, the sample became over weighted for those respondents who are older and female.

According to the survey, 59% of survey respondents in Lincoln County stated they have used information and services of the Lincoln County UW-Extension office. Of the 59% who utilized the UW-Extension office, 96% indicated they valued the information and services. 86% of respondents were aware that 4-H is open to all youth, both urban and rural. The majority (62%) of respondents stated they would travel up to thirty miles to attend an educational training or program. Written materials, study on own and newspaper were ranked as the top three ways respondents preferred to get information.

The survey instrument consisted of nine questions and asked respondents to rate the importance of community issues in two ways. First, how important the issue is to the person responding or to a member of their family, and second, how important the respondent perceived the issue to be for others in the community. Most questions asked respondents to rate their response along a scale from one to seven, with one being the lowest and seven being the highest of importance. During the past year, UW-Extension staff have been reviewing the survey results, discussing with other groups and organizations, and gathering additional assessment data to determine program emphasis for our next four-year planning cycle to begin in 2009.

2008 Programming Efforts

1. *Building community and organizational capacity for meeting the needs of local residents.*

- **Financial education.** In cooperation with Probation and Parole, and the County Judicial group, the series “Spending Plan Basics: Where Does the Money Go?” was taught twice in 2008, for those county residents who were referred. Some of the topics taught by Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator included: organizing your bills and payments, 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. Three Financial Counselor trainings were taught by Janke with the Marathon County Family Living Educator for both Marathon and Lincoln County residents. As a result, training was planned for 2009 to include financial volunteers from Lincoln County Financial Institutions. Financial education programs were also provided by Brenda per request for Head start Parents and a regional aging education day.
- **Financial Education through the media.** Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator did several newspaper columns and radio programs in Merrill and Tomahawk, focused on financial education issues/questions she received. She also worked with Channel 12 television station in Rhinelander to do news story features in this area. As 2008 came to a close and 2009 began, topics covered and resources provided focused on helping families who are experiencing a reduction in their salary and/or job loss.
- **Family Plans and Discussions: Transferring Personal Property.** “Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate” was taught by Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator at a multi-county conference, held in Rhinelander with approximately 80 people attending this session. The program offered options for families/couples/individuals who wanted to disburse their personal possessions, making it a positive family celebration while avoiding family conflict. 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.
- **Nutrition and food security.** The UW-Extension Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) staff made a total of 1,206 educational contacts during teaching events during the year, reaching 681 different learners. Forty-two percent were youth, 27% families with children, 28% older adults, and 3% adults without children. Forty-six percent of learners were female. Three percent of learners were disabled and the race of 96% of the learners was white. Lincoln/Taylor educators used the learn-while-you-wait educational strategy to reach 44% of learners, one-time group educational strategy for 29%, and the multi-group educational strategy for 27% of learners. Teaching event topics were mainly nutrition/dietary quality topics (82%); with 6% food resource management topics, 5% food security topics, 7% food safety topics.
- **Increasing proper hand washing.** Teachers at Washington Elementary School identified the lack of proper hand washing as an area of concern with younger elementary students. This concern is consistent with studies which have shown that many adults forget to wash their hands before food handling even though they are aware of the possible food-borne illnesses that may result with this practice. It is for this reason WNEP educators decided to teach two lessons on hand washing to students before each child finishes 3rd grade. In Kindergarten or 1st grade each student participates in a hand washing lesson on the topic of germs. The students learn what germs are, how they are spread, and how to sneeze and cough so germs don’t spread. The students also participate in a hand washing activity in the classroom. In 2nd or 3rd grade students participate in another lesson on hand washing. This time the learner is taught four ways to keep their food safe; wash hands, refrigerate, rinse fruits and vegetables, and keep counters clean. The students again participate in a hand washing activity and learn when to wash hands and for how long. After the 2nd lesson this year parents of the 2nd and 3rd grade students were sent a survey on hand washing. Sixty eight of the surveys were returned. Sixty eight percent of the parents returning the survey reported that their child seemed more willing to wash hands, 50% reported that their child has been washing hands for 20 seconds, and 57% of parents reported that their child has been washing hands without being reminded. Thirty seven percent of the parents reported that their child has been reminding others to wash their hands. The results of this evaluation were very rewarding to WNEP staff. One of the most difficult groups to reach with nutrition education is the parents of elementary students.

Report #25

The results of this lesson showed that not only did more than one half of the students make a change in their hand washing behaviors at home, more than one-third of the students' families were being reminded to wash their hands.

- **Food safety and preservation.** Pressure canner lid testing, discussions and publication resources were provided at the Merrill and Tomahawk Farmers Markets. Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator broached the subject with vendors prior to her scheduled attendance, and received a favorable response. Media work was done in advance so that preservers were aware of the availability of these resources at the local Farmers Markets. The articles also offered promotion for the Farmers Markets. Tomahawk vendors stated they had their best attendance, and felt that it was due to the local promotion provided by Family Living's attendance. A 2009 three county Master Food Preserver training will be held as an extension of this educational outreach. A local orchard has also expressed interest in having a demonstration at their business in 2009.
- **Good Samaritan Health Center Foundation Strategic Planning Project.** Art Lersch, Community Resource Development educator, developed a strategic planning process for and conducted five meetings with the Good Samaritan Health Center Foundation Board. The Foundation Director and Health Center Corporate Operations Officer also participated. They identified organizational mandates, evaluated the Foundation's mission and vision, conducted a stakeholder analysis, and developed organizational goals and strategies. This very first Foundation strategic plan now serves as the basis for carrying out the organization's broader mission of being a primary catalyst helping the Merrill area's poor and underserved.
- **Merrill Area United Way Outcomes Trainings.** Throughout the second half of 2008, Community Resource Development educator Art Lersch worked with the Merrill Area United Way to help change the paradigm under which its funds are granted. When soliciting Lersch's services, the United Way director admitted that some of her Board members and many directors of agencies receiving United Way support were apprehensive about the organization's pronouncement that it would now fund only programs that have the potential of meeting pressing community needs rather than entire agencies. To help quell these fears and to teach outcomes based programming, Lersch developed and taught three workshops to 55 agency directors and United Way Board members. In the first two sessions, he used the logic model in reverse to illustrate how participants could develop meaningful and measurable program outcomes. Attendees completed hands on exercises related to real or hypothetical programs based on a matrix created by Lersch. Among other things, the matrix required participants to develop outcomes statements, to demonstrate how realistic and measurable the chosen outcomes would be, and to articulate how important it was in community terms that they be achieved. A slightly modified version of the matrix was used in the official Merrill Area United Way Grant Application for 2008 (due November 12, 2008). When asked to "rate the overall effectiveness of the first workshop in terms of new things that [they] learned and/or important concepts that [they] previously knew about that were reinforced," the average response was 3.05 on a 1 to 4 scale, (range between "quite effective" and "extremely effective;" 21 total respondents). In summing up what she learned in the training, one participant wrote "Allocating funds for United Way should not be just about numbers. We need to understand the impact of these organizations in a measurable way. The 'outcomes' are what will improve the quality of lives and change ways in which people take charge of their lives." During the third training, Lersch used a worksheet that he developed to walk attendees through the process of designing an outcomes based program. The worksheet forced participants to articulate what community issue their chosen program would address, the program's vision, short-term outcomes, the indicators for those outcomes, potential long-term outcomes, and evaluation questions. When asked on evaluations to "rate how useful [they felt] the worksheet was in helping ... think through and plan an outcomes based program," the average rating was 3.3 out of 4 (3 being "quite useful" and 4 being "extremely" useful). Following the trainings, Lersch provided advice to several applicants looking to strengthen the outcomes based program design approach outlined in their grant proposals. He later evaluated all the outcomes matrix charts (23) that were submitted. Based on that work (and previous participant evaluations), it was evident that the trainings helped applicants understand what constitutes a measurable outcome and how to develop effective outcomes statements. They also better understand, Lersch and the United Way director agree, how client changes based on their program participation can be measured.
- **Lincoln County Human Resources Group Planning.** Requested by the county's Administrative Coordinator, Community Resource Development educator Art Lersch designed a process for and facilitated Human Services Group (10 members) strategic planning meetings. Using the SOAR model (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) and Appreciative Inquiry, the group formed a vision of how county human services departments should interact. This led to the development of a goal to merge the social services and developmental disabilities departments and to explore the consolidation of other county Human Services agencies. This goal is currently being pursued. Both Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator and Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent are members of the Human Service Group.

Report #25

- **Parenting resources.** Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator has provided a variety of programs and is working through several collaborative efforts in the county to provide parenting education programs. For example, she covered the topic of Teen Brain Development and the effect of the use of drugs and alcohol on the developing teen brain during a FACT Supper hosted by Tomahawk Together in September. During this event a brief overview, display, and handouts were provided to a standing room only crowd of approximately 300 plus parents and youth. Brenda continues to partner with the Lincoln County Health Department and Merrill Area Public Schools, in providing “Parenting the First Year”, “Parenting the Second Year” and “Parenting the Third Year” newsletters. Approximately 500 Lincoln County families received one of these newsletters each month or every other month. Through the age paced/timely 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 the prevention of child abuse. As funds decrease for the Lincoln County Family Resource Center, questions have arisen as to who will be able to provide needed Parenting Education in Lincoln County in the future. Brenda provided an overview of parenting education programs she is providing and potential ones as the Interagency Parenting Task Force group continues to explore options for providing parenting education programs with decreasing resources. The Lincoln County UW-Extension Community Program Advisory Group (CPAG) also identified parenting as a need/issue in the county.
- **Identifying Priorities Related to Lincoln County’s Aging Population.** Following an educational campaign which saw Art Lersch, Community Resource Development educator present information about Lincoln County aging population trends to nearly 260 stakeholders throughout most of 2007, he designed and conducted with Extension colleague Brenda Janke two World Café discussion sessions aimed at exploring how best to serve local seniors. Thirty-two (32) people took part in the Café discussions. Consensus was reached that the most important thing to accomplish is to develop a central county clearinghouse of information where seniors can easily access human services based on individual needs.
- **Family and youth services directory.** During 2008, Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent continued to work with Donna Winker, Commission on Aging Coordinator and Lynn Zentner, Merrill Area United Way Director to explore how the Lincoln County Family and Youth Resource Directory (Linc-on) could be transitioned into 211 or the Aging and Disability Resource Center effort that is being initiated for Lincoln County. In March of 2009, the directory and management of the website was turned over to the Commission on Aging Department to utilize as they move forward with the Aging and Disability Resource Center. The mission of this directory has been to provide residents and professionals with a centralized information source of family and youth resources/services available, which will provide a starting data base for this transition.
- **Lincoln County Home and Community Education (HCE) Community Outreach.** HCE has been affiliated with UW Extension for 75 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. Approximately 58 volunteers read to 200 children in Tomahawk and Merrill Head Start and Parkside Daycare programs. The volunteers read a book and work on an activity sheet each month with the children. The children then take their own 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 Pine Crest Nursing Home residents and other residents of local assisted living homes throughout the county. In the past years they have made and distributed almost 400 wheel chair and walker bags. HCE also supports our youth with two \$500 scholarships given to worthy county high school students. The UW Extension Family Living Educator, Brenda Janke, serves as the HCE advisor and presents a educational programs each year to this group.
- **Capacity Building for Tomahawk Main Street Program.** Years of research projects and trainings developed and conducted by the Lincoln County Community Resource Development educator Art Lersch in conjunction with the Tomahawk Chamber of Commerce laid a foundation upon which the city’s Downtown Business Council applied for and was awarded Wisconsin Main Street program designation in 2008. Lersch’s pivotal role in helping to develop capacity in the retail sector to apply for the Main Street program was sited by local stakeholders as invaluable. His collaboration with Tomahawk retailers and the Chamber began in the spring of 2005 when he worked with them to design a special business retention and expansion questionnaire. The results of the study served as the primary impetus for the Chamber and Extension to conduct preliminary planning sessions with retailers where the genesis of a “shop local” campaign was formulated. During the planning sessions, local retailers also designed cooperative marketing initiatives (radio and local newspaper) extolling the benefits of shopping in downtown locations. In early 2006, Lersch and the Chamber developed a study that provided valuable information about the Tomahawk shopping experience to retailers and Chamber staff working to strengthen the city’s emerging “shop local” initiative. Results showed that 52%

Report #25

of the 106 respondents shopped five times or less per month in local stores, indicating that the “shop local” campaign needed to be strengthened and that additional more aggressive steps would likely be required to revitalize downtown businesses. Later in the year and into 2007 the need for the “shop local campaign” and Main Street became even more evident after an analysis of information garnered from focus groups designed and conducted by Lersch and the Chamber Director. Participant comments 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 sectors (“Try Tomahawk First”) that was adopted by the Chamber and Downtown Council for the “shop local” campaign. Using all the information obtained from these studies and influenced by what they learned about downtown revitalization during other trainings and planning sessions conducted by Lersch in collaboration with the Chamber, retailers began the Main Street application process. Their primary accomplishment during the early Main Street program planning stages was to develop and gain approval for a business improvement district that provides nearly half of Main Street program revenue. (Lersch had outlined the BID and Main Street concepts during one of his first trainings with the group in late 2005). Lersch also provided general advice about how the Main Street application should be developed, wrote sections of it, and gave a final accurate assessment of the document to the Main Street Committee based on Department of Commerce judging criteria. After changes were made to the application based largely on Lersch’s suggestions, it was submitted to Commerce. In summer 2008, Governor Doyle announced that the city was granted the Main Street designation! As of July 2008, the Main Street committee was in the beginning stages of developing the program’s organizational structure and hiring its part-time director.

- **First Impressions Study for Merrill.** Art Lersch, Community Resource Development educator organized First Impressions studies with Ashland and Baraboo, Wisconsin. Invented by the University of Wisconsin – Extension, the First Impressions program provides unbiased, non-resident, “secret shopper” type evaluations of cities. Lersch persuaded the Merrill Marketing Committee that information about Merrill obtained from objective sources could be used to help market the city. He also persuaded committee members that constructive criticism obtained via the studies might help to suggest how things like downtown ambiance and community entrances could be improved. In April, Lersch and Andy Lewis, co-creator of First Impressions, prepared Merrill’s seven team members, including its Mayor, to conduct the studies. Shortly thereafter trips were made by the team to Ashland and Baraboo while those cities sent evaluation teams to Merrill. After compiling First Impressions reports for the city based on Ashland and Baraboo team feedback, Lersch gave three presentations summarizing study results and suggesting possible development strategies. Seventy – six (76) community stakeholders participated in discussions related to the information presented. Based on the information, the Merrill Chamber of Commerce and city officials also have discussed partnering on the design and installation of new directional signage throughout the city and a possible building mural program. Report information was also used by the Merrill Marketing Committee as a basis to help it draft a comprehensive city marketing plan for and helped clarify the city’s development priorities.
- **Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce Planning.** Thirteen Merrill Area Chamber of Commerce stakeholders met to review progress on the Chamber’s 2008 goals and set priorities for the coming year. The planning process was designed and facilitated by Art Lersch, Lincoln County Community Resource Development educator. Identified goals for 2009 include completion of a new Chamber website and trainings for Chamber members on how to use it, to develop a Chamber marketing package focusing on the benefits of utilizing the website, and to expand partnerships in the effort to enhance Merrill streetscapes.
- **Lincoln County Recycling Education Sessions.** Community Resource Development educator Art Lersch worked with Joe Van Rossum from SHWEC (Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center), the Bell Tower Residence, and local landfill and solid waste experts to organize and conduct two recycling education sessions. One session was held for 74 Bell Tower Residence (assisted living facility) employees. The other session was attended by 18 local residents. Participants learned what can and cannot be recycled, about county and city land fill regulations, and composting techniques.
- **Safely Disposing of Hazardous Materials:** On September 5th Lincoln County held a Hazardous Waste, Ag and Pharmaceutical Clean Sweep that surpassed our expectations. The UW-Extension office partnered with several other Lincoln County departments in planning, promoting and conducting the Clean Sweep. A total of 234 vehicles dropped off approximately 17,000 pounds (8.5 tons) of various household and agricultural hazardous waste chemicals. Preliminary estimates from the hazardous waste contractors who were here for packaging, transportation and disposal estimate this amount of material could cost \$13,000. An additional 99 pounds of pharmaceuticals were collected that day of which 22 pounds were considered controlled medications that were taken for proper disposal to an incinerator in St. Louis. Events like this provide residents with an opportunity to properly dispose of household/agricultural waste and pharmaceuticals. Proper disposal of these items reduces a significant threat to the environment along with decreasing access to unused prescription drugs by young people in our county.

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

- **Reducing underage alcohol and other drug use.** The mission of the Lincoln County Drug Free Coalition is to bring various sectors of the community together to reduce the use/abuse of alcohol and other drugs by youth and over time by adults. This coalition involves representatives of law enforcement (county and both City of Merrill and Tomahawk), school representation, county health department, county social services, local hospital personnel, county health care facility, youth and local nonprofit agencies. Brenda Janke, Family Living Educator; Amanda Kostman, 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor, and Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent are all members of this coalition. Brenda Janke's focus shifted during 2008 from working with the Merrill Social Norms project to focus more on parenting education, including Teen Brain Development and serving on the subcommittee for the "Parents That Host Lose the Most" campaign initiated in the spring of 2008. Amanda Kostman's efforts have been focused on building connections and incorporating older youth involved in Teen Court, Success Skills or 4-H. Debbie Moellendorf continues to provide leadership for the Merrill Social Norms committee as well as providing support to the coalition in implementation of the "Strategic Prevention Framework" utilized by the Drug Free Communities grant (5-year grant) the coalition received in October of 2004. Funds from this grant received by the coalition were utilized to increase the Family Living Educator position and fund additional time for the 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor position to take on some responsibilities of 4-H Youth Development Agent position to focus on the development of a Social Norms Marketing project in the Merrill area. The social norms marketing campaign had only been in existence for about 6 months when the 2008 Social Norms surveys were conducted in February of 2008. The following are excerpts from the evaluation summaries prepared by the National Social Norms Center housed at Northern Illinois University.

"Based on the results of the student surveys, the marketing efforts have succeeded in exposing students to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use information with posters and the posters appear to have had the intended effect of changing student misperceptions of the peer norm. Actual concurrent behavior change is minimally positive and encouraging. Many projects see no impact after just one year's intervention so these results suggest that there will be even greater impact following the next consecutive year of a social norms intervention." It is important to remember that the purpose of the social norms project is to correct misperceptions of how their peers think and act which have been found to be influential in shaping individual choices for behaviors. This same correction in misperceptions of use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs was also shown in the parent and staff surveys.

During 2008, both Moellendorf and Janke worked with Tomahawk Together, a community coalition to provide educational programs and activities focused on the reduction of alcohol and other drugs among youth. This included the development of a parent covenant/agreement based on the 40 developmental assets, hosting a FACT supper for over 300 youth, parents and other community members and beginning plans for a youth/parent event to be held in early 2009. As a result of these efforts, dialogue is underway on how to involve Tomahawk Together in the Lincoln County Drug Free Coalition and expand the coalition's efforts in the Tomahawk community and countywide.

- **Teen Court Steering Committee.** Four youth and seven adults from various agencies and schools have continued to work together with the support of Amanda Kostman, 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. Members of the Steering Committee and the 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor secured \$1,400 through Lincoln County Safe and Stable Families Grant managed through Social Services to support the Teen Court program, \$1,000 from the Merrill Noon Optimist Club and \$200 from the Merrill Rotary Club. In addition, respondents are required to pay a \$20 fee to offset additional expenses for the program.
- **Learning from mistakes.** Twenty-seven 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. Amanda Kostman, 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor serves as the coordinator for Teen Court. As the coordinator, she secured the use of already established programs and partnered with organizations to create and teach the "Success Skills Program". In addition, respondents also wrote essays, apology letters and completed community service hours as restitution for the offense they committed. Amanda Kostman secured a \$600 grant from Lincoln Safe and Stable Families grant managed by Lincoln County Social Services to provide the "Success Skills" program. This program was also open to youth referred to the program by School Guidance Counselors and Social Workers. Nine youth took part in the success

skills program where they learned communication and decision-making skills, assertiveness and conflict management skills, and how to prepare for entering the job market.

- **4-H participation.** 4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. During the 2007-08 4-H year, 1,110 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 85 community service projects done in 2007-08 4-H year by 17 4-H clubs in Lincoln County. One 4-H club received funds through the Wisconsin 4-H Foundation (\$400) and another grant (\$250) from the Safe and Stable Families Grant through the Lincoln County Department of Social Services to support their service projects. In addition, the 4-H Ambassadors received a \$100 grant from the Wisconsin 4-H Foundation to support their service project increasing recycling within the schools. This project was conducted in conjunction with their outreach efforts through after school programs. 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.
- **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 through a partnership 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, during local radio programs, and during the county fair. During the 2008-09 school year, the Ambassador started 3 new After School 4-H Clubs at Washington Elementary School, Prairie River Middle School and Tomahawk Elementary School. Youth involved in the After School Clubs are enrolled as 4-H members, involved in community service projects, and are experiencing a variety of 4-H project related experiences.
- **4-H Summer Camp.** Ten older youth counselors from Lincoln County along with Taylor County youth counselors planned the 4-H Summer Camp program to give campers opportunities to build on their life skills, while having fun in a safe environment. Adult volunteers and staff from both counties provided resources and guidance to counselors. Campers stayed in cabins and participated in a variety of activities. All the activities were led by older 4-H youth counselors. Twenty campers, ten counselors and four adults from Lincoln County participated in the camp program this year. Eight of the campers whom indicated that they needed financial assistance to cover the registration fee were granted “camperships” to attend camp through a grant secured by the 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor through the Safe and Stable Families Grant managed by Social Services. 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 from the training, the counselors indicated that the focus on planning, discussion of conflict management, and behavior issues were the most useful.
- **Making a Difference.** The 4-H Youth Development Agent collaborated with Merrill Forward Together Healthy Community Initiative to plan and implement the 13th Annual Make a Difference Day on Saturday, October 25, 2008. This year 225 youth and 77 adults completed 38 projects throughout the Merrill area. In addition, students from the Alternative High School completed three projects the Friday before and seven additional projects were completed by 6th grade classrooms during the following week. Service events like this are designed to improve the developmental assets of *Values Helping Other People* and *Other Adult Resources* among young people. Through their experience young people discovered the benefits of helping others and began to value this in their lives. Also by working in teams of youth and adults, young people were getting to know other adults and how to work as a team to carry out their projects. In addition to the volunteers, community members receiving help also began to view young people as resources in the community and may have a more positive view of young people as a result.
- **Supporting After School programs.** From educators to law enforcement to parents, there is universal agreement that after-school programs reinforce student learning and provide safe havens and enrichment opportunities during non-school hours. Afterschool programs keep youth out of trouble by providing safe and structured time during critical afternoon hours. Furthermore, afterschool programming provides an important ingredient to parent’s employment stability. Afterschool programs benefit the entire family by giving parents peace of mind about what their children are doing after-school, consequently helping them to balance work and family responsibilities. With no Boys and Girls

Clubs or YMCA's in Lincoln County, UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development staff and the schools have been looked to in providing after school programs. UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development staff have been looked to for assessing need, providing support for grant writing and other funding, providing training and curriculum resources, working with older youth to teach programs during before and after-school programs, teaching programs during after school programs, implementation of after school programs, and evaluating impact of programs. For the third year in a row, Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent has successfully applied for and implemented a training grant (\$1,800) made available through the State 4-H Youth Development program area along with key partners throughout the county. Based on the limited number of staff working with after school programming in Lincoln County and the opportunities for training available outside the county, training funds were utilized to support Lincoln County's participation in these existing trainings during 2008. This included participating in "Building Partners and Advocates to Sustain Wisconsin After School Network" wisline web training in February, hosting and participating in the NE Regional After School Training in Merrill in March, sending a team of eight individuals from three after school programs including two youth to the State After School Conference in Appleton in April, and participating in the "Building Partners and Advocates to Sustain Wisconsin After School Network" wisline web training in May. To assist in sharing resources and ideas gained with others at these trainings, Debbie facilitated after school staff from throughout the county meeting on May 6th. Based on the benefits of this experience, the group decided to form the "Lincoln County After School Network" and to meet on a quarterly basis to share resources and ideas for strengthening and expanding before and after school programs in Lincoln County. It was decided to rotate hosting of the quarterly meetings to provide an opportunity for people to view different programs in the county. Two additional network meetings were held during 2008. By working together, sharing resources and knowledge, members of the network are conducting quality before and after school programs for elementary and middle school youth in Lincoln County.

- **"After the Bell" program for Middle School Students.** Research shows that youth who are supervised and engaged in structured activities during critical after school hours are less likely to participate in high risk activities. For middle school students, being supervised after school reduces by half the risk that they will smoke, drink, or abuse drugs. Through leadership provided by Debbie Moellendorf, 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 2007-08 school year, 100 different youth participated in the "After the Bell" enrichment program with an average of 19 students per day. Thirty-four of these students also took part in "After the Bell Plus" (tutoring program sponsored by School District grant). Nineteen adult and four high school students were involved in providing enrichment programs during the school year. The steering committee raised \$6,449 from various community organizations, businesses and \$3,390 in grants to fund staffing costs (program coordinator and additional supervisor) and supplies (snacks and program supplies) for the 2007-08 "After the Bell – enrichment program. In addition, a \$17,010 grant was used by the school district to support the "After the Bell Plus – tutoring program" which included paying teachers as tutors, hiring a coordinator for the program (same person who coordinates "After the Bell" program) and hiring an additional parent supervisor each day to help with increased number of participants. The majority of participants who responded to the participant evaluation indicated that the "After the Bell" enrichment program provided them with a place to go after school where they felt a sense of belonging (i.e. positive relationship with adults involved, feel welcome and safe while at the program), provided them with opportunities to learn new skills (i.e. learn new skills, be creative and share what they have learned with others), develop more independence (i.e. opportunities to choose and plan activities in the program) and allowed them to participate in service to others (i.e. community service projects, helping others in the program). A majority of participants, who indicated they had participated in the fitness, nutrition and cooking programs indicated that their participation in these programs helped them increase their level of exercise, helped them develop healthier eating habits and they learned how to prepare healthy food items for themselves and/or others. Karen Thell, WNEP Educator, taught the nutrition and cooking sessions twice each month and Kris Albrecht, Physical Education Teacher at the Middle School volunteered her time to teach daily fitness sessions from the end of January through April.
- **Providing Safety Education.** Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent, continues to serve as a member of the Lincoln County Safety Day Camp committee. On August 12th, this committee conducted the 14th Annual Safety Day Camp at the MARC Center in Merrill. In 2008, the committee partnered with both the Merrill and Tomahawk Summer Recreation programs to include this event in their summer programming schedule. During the event, 67 3rd and 4th grade youth learned about staying safe around the kitchen, electricity, guns, atv's, on the internet, around the farm, lawn care equipment, chemicals, in severe weather and the risks of smoking. Ninety percent of the youth rated each session as excellent or okay with less than 10% indicating a session needed improvement. All of the youth could

list at least one new piece of information they learned to help them stay safer at home, on the farm or in their neighborhood. Each of the participants were provided with an activity booklet that provided additional information about each of the topics presented during the camp and activities they could do at home. In addition, the booklet provided information on additional safety topics not covered during the event and information for parents/guardians.

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

- **Entrepreneurial Training Program.** Art Lersch, Community Resource Development educator, organized and taught several sessions of a comprehensive Entrepreneurial Training Course. Nine (9) mostly Lincoln County residents graduated. Lersch taught sessions on general business planning, financial statements, target market analysis, and goal setting. Guest speakers were Chris Toner, an Attorney with Ruder Ware in Wausau, Jack Sroka, Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation Director, Dave Jannusch, an Accountant with Richard Mamer and Associates, and Craig Lau, President of Lincoln Community Bank. Successful entrepreneurs also shared their stories and provided useful information. When asked on evaluations "To what extent did this course increase your knowledge of business planning?" the average response was 4.5 (out of 5) (between "quite a bit" and "tremendously"). When asked "To what extent did this course increase your knowledge of how to start a business?" the average response was 4.25 (out of 5). A student commented: "Art was knowledgeable and does a great job." By the end of the year, students were completing their business plans and finalizing other details necessary to open their businesses.
- **Youth learn business skills through operating the 4-H Youth Marketplace.** For the fifth straight year, the Community Resource Development educator and the 4-H Youth Program Director conducted the Youth Marketplace at the county fair. Seven youth participated. Program evaluations indicated that participants learned much. When asked "How much of a learning experience it was for them to act as business owner/manager?" the average response was 4, with 5 meaning "a great deal." Nearly all participants reported marked improvement in their decision – making skills and their ability to work in teams.
- **Agribusiness Incubator Project:** A Mentoring System Development grant project that was begun in October of 2005 was completed this year by Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator. He led a local committee of dairy farmers who were interested in helping develop greater local capacity to mentor new and aspiring farmers. The group researched several mentoring projects around the US and visited one in Massachusetts. After doing their research they came to the conclusion that it would be much better to develop some simple mentoring tip sheets and teaching modules that could be included in already existing newsletters and workshops. In 2009 the group will be pursuing a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development grant with other state and local partners to further develop those resources.
- **Area Grazing Network Leads the State:** 2008 saw continued growth and development of by far the largest grazing network in the state of Wisconsin, the Central Wisconsin River Graziers. The success of the partnership between Lincoln and Marathon County Extension and Land Conservation Offices in coordinating this network is not only reflected in the 35% increase in attendance at area pasture walks from 2007 to 2008, on February 26th it held a very successful 14th annual Heart of Wisconsin Grazing Conference in Mosinee. With 110 farmers in attendance it was the largest regional/local farmer conferences in the state, larger than many state level conferences. The Network even attracted Governor Jim Doyle who used the farm of one of the network members to announce a \$381,000 Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative to support grazing system development in the state, funded by Wisconsin's fertilizer and chemical industry.
- **Facilitating Farmers Teaching Farmers about Management Intensive Grazing:** Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator worked collaboratively with others in providing eight pasture walks on local farms for over 360 area farmers. This was approximately 110 more farmers than attended pasture walks in 2007. Grazing based livestock production continues to gain in popularity for several reasons; with the primary reason being economic. Research conducted by UW-Extension has shown that grazing based production systems are consistently more profitable than confinement based systems. This is even more so in years when energy, feed and other inputs are extremely high, as they were in 2008. Pasture walks have shown themselves to be a very effective method of teaching grazing principles since farmers join in the educational process.
- **Teaching about Sustainable Farming Systems.** Approximately 100 students from the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources attended classes on sustainable farming systems taught by Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator at the Lincoln County dairy farm of Mike and Jill Braunel. The Braunel Farm has hosted these classes for eight years. The classes focus on the environmental and financial sustainability of grazing based dairy systems.

- **Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers graduates 12 and enrolls 6 more in a new location.** In 2007 and 2008 Tom Cadwallader lead 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 thirteen year old Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers (WSBDF), offered through the Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) 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, the 2007-08 class graduated 61 students who took the class in Madison, Reedsburg, Phillips, Spooner and Wausau. The Wausau class was held at the UW-Marathon County campus and it had the largest distance education enrollment with 12, three coming from Lincoln County.
- **Helping Farms Plan for Their Future:** Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator did in-depth financial planning work with six area farmers as they evaluated options for the future of their farms. While it isn't possible to spend the 2-3 days of meetings and financial analyses that go into good financial planning work with all farmers, Extension does work with unique situations and shares the processes and ideas that come out of such work with other farmers and agricultural professionals in the area. Farms that are looking at unique management structures, diversified crops and new production systems that financial advisors and lenders lack expertise on. Projects ranged from multi-family operating agreements, grazing and organic production systems and dairy start-up operations.
- **Developed Financial Benchmarks and a Recordkeeping Process for Grazing Based Dairy Farms:** Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator worked with a farmer discussion group to develop some local financial benchmarks for grazing based dairy farms. Although the project only involved 7 different farms the data collection was fairly extensive and compiling and analyzing the valuable data took a large time commitment of the farmers and Extension. One of the major accomplishments of the project was developing a uniform method of tracking and comparing financial numbers from the various farmers. The farmers involved in the process found the project very helpful in helping them make management decisions in a very volatile marketing year and what was learned will be used in a number of future educational activities.
- **Helping Farmers Deal with Volatile Commodity Prices:** The agricultural commodity markets were extremely unstable in 2008. While rapidly increasing fuel prices increased all input costs, especially fertilizer prices, the push for biofuels, tight world stockpiles of food and increasing demand for animal products because of improving economies have significantly increased the price of food commodities. The devaluation of the dollar in world financial markets further only exacerbated the situation. The turbulence is created a tremendous amount of speculation among all parties in agricultural production which increased the demand to information on setting new prices for farmland and farmland rental rates. During 2008 the Agricultural Development Educator devoted over 80 hours in helping landowners and renters work through the process of setting fair land rental rates.
- **Meeting the Farm Management Information Needs to the Agricultural Community:** The highest agricultural information demand coming into the Lincoln County Extension Office is in the area of farm financial management. In 2008 the Agricultural Development Agent had 1060 learner contacts in one-on-one sessions, workshops, pasture walks and classes related to farm management topics. Questions that were the most common included farm and farmland values, calculating rental rates, the market value for feedstuffs and transitioning to new farm owners.
- **Researching the State of the Ginseng Industry in Wisconsin:** Working with Extension Agricultural Economic specialists, Tom Cadwallader, helped the Ginseng Board of Wisconsin conduct an in-depth analysis of the Wisconsin Ginseng industry that will allow the industry to better guide its efforts to rebuild the industry. The report will also be extremely beneficial in helping it develop the support of growers and state and federal agencies in meeting its challenges. A copy of the report can be found at: <http://www.aae.wisc.edu/pubs/misc/docs/Mitchell.WI.Ginseng.Industry.2009.pdf>.
- **Improving the Value of Wisconsin's Ginseng Crop:** One of the major issues facing the Wisconsin Ginseng industry as they develop their international markets is meeting GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) standards that are commonly put into place to assure distributors that crops meet certain standards. A critical GAP standard that needs to be met is minimal or no pesticide residues in the final product. In order to meet that standard a ginseng grower needs to start with disease free seed and up until now the industry hasn't had any seed certification program in place. In 2008 Tom Cadwallader, Agricultural Development Educator worked with the director of the Wisconsin Crop Improvement Association to begin the process of developing a seed certification program.
- **Safely Applying Agricultural Chemicals:** Approximately 150 area farmers took part in pesticide applicator training sessions offered by UW-Extension in 2008. These sessions are required by any farmers wishing to apply restricted use pesticides and Extension takes the lead role in conducting the training that is required for certification.

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

- **Leadership Lincoln County.** For the second year in a row, 10 people were graduates of the Leadership Lincoln County program. Designed by community stakeholders in collaboration with Art Lersch, Community Resource Development educator, the program enhances participants' leadership skills, informs them about important countywide issues, and encourages them to take on community leadership roles. As part of the curriculum, Lersch taught two sessions of the popular 7 Habits of Highly Effective People course. His Extension colleague and 4-H Youth Development educator Debbie Moellendorf walked group members through a highly entertaining and thought provoking personality assessment called "Colors." Tom Cadwallader, Lincoln County Agricultural educator, also conducted two conflict resolution workshops. Jack Sroka of Lincoln County Economic Development Corporation organized and hosted two sessions highlighting economic development progress in Lincoln County's two cities. Government Day included presentations by a UW-Extension, Madison Local Government Center specialist and local elected and administrative officials. When asked "What specific leadership or self improvement skills that you learned through Leadership Lincoln County do you **intend to apply** in the real world?," graduates said the following:
 - Show my commitment to the community by getting involved with community programs or committees that help to promote Merrill.
 - Personality differences reflected in the Colors program will help me as I deal with work (employees and customers) and home. [This] will help me be more tolerant of others.
 - Clearly "hearing" what the other person is saying! Often, we are too busy and rushed... other voices matter!
 - Negotiating. Choice (time to think before I react). Teach my daughters to become better leaders.
 - Framework for conflict management.
 - Especially the Covey 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

Additional evaluation feedback indicated marked improvement by participant in various leadership skills as a result of the training.

- **Teaching How to Manage Conflict:** Managing conflict toward mutual success continues to be a popular topic for Extension educators to teach about. Because effectively managing conflict is such an important part of any successful relationship between people, either as individuals or as a part of groups and/or communities, the steering committee for Leadership Lincoln County asked that two sessions be devoted to the topic in 2007-2008. Evaluations from the workshops were very good. Participants said they improved their understanding of the topics by at least 25% on a Likert scale. As would be expected in any complex topic, each person walked away with different things they felt would be useful to them. One person said that the process of breaking down a conflict into different parts in order to achieve a positive outcome to a conflict while another the conflict mapping exercise the most helpful. Others thought that better understanding of the various perceptions individuals have when they view something was a very important concept to understand. When asked how the conflict management workshops could be improved the only suggestion was to include more hand-on, local examples to work on but other than that participants were very satisfied with the workshop and material covered.
- **Working with others.** During 2008, Debbie Moellendorf, 4-H Youth Development Agent facilitated the "Colors Spoken Here – Real Colors" session for 212 adults and 49 youth. "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 works styles of their co-workers/peers; and would help them work more effectively with workplace teams, community groups and family members.
- **Teen Court.** Trained by Amanda Kostman, 4-H Youth Development Program Advisor and Teen Court Coordinator, 39 youth grades 6-12 from both Tomahawk and Merrill who applied to serve as Teen Court Panel members learned communication and life skills, gained responsibility and community pride while doing a service for their community. Twenty-seven youth 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.
- **Youth Leadership training.** Older youth were provided with numerous opportunities to develop and enhance their leadership capabilities through 4-H youth development programs. 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.

Report #25

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 volunteer leadership.** 4-H adult volunteers (157) received resources and training from 4-H Youth Development staff through face-to-face trainings, one-on-one consultations, and newsletters in 2008. These adult volunteers carry out the roles of club organizational leaders, project leaders, activity leaders and resource leaders to supplement the work of Extension professionals in providing educational opportunities for the 332 young people enrolled as 4-H members throughout Lincoln County. The typical 4-H volunteer contributes 7.9 hours a month. With a conservative value of \$6 per hour, that volunteer service is worth \$89,302 to Lincoln County.
- **Focus on government.** 4-H provides youth direct experience with democratic practices and electoral processes. In 2008, about 85 Lincoln County 4-H youth were elected to offices in the 17 local 4-H clubs. In addition, about 20 youth served as officers on county committees. UW-Extension professionals work with adult volunteers to provide 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.