

Western District Digest

August 2008

This communication can be found on the web at
<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/dist/western/communications.html>

Colleagues: As much as I enjoy getting out in the district and visiting your offices, August has proven a month with less travel and an opportunity to start on some of those projects I've been "eyeing" since I started in January. The major transitions have finally started to settle down, our new office is becoming a comfortable "home away from home" now that most of the boxes are unpacked, and Liz and I are finally starting to learn more of the ropes! There's a long way to go and there will always be something new to learn, but we are both feeling better now that we have finally achieved some semblance of order here! (And then came the flood from the upstairs apartment a couple of weeks ago...but things have even returned to normal after that!)

We have enjoyed hosting several sets of preliminary interviews here and this week we welcomed Jon Zander and a number of his colleagues for a planning session on Monday, and Greg Andrews and his New Orleans cultural immersion planning team on Tuesday. If you have a small group that would like to meet here, please don't hesitate to ask. We're happy to put the coffee pot on for you! And while you're here you can do your laundry, attend a movie matinee, buy stamps at the post office, go to the bank, and have lunch...all without walking more than a block! Ah...small town America!

Please continue to keep in touch with Liz and I and let us know how we can assist you. We are both committed to providing you with the best service and support that we possibly can. You deserve nothing less given the huge contributions you make that have such positive impacts on our youth, families, businesses, and communities in the Western District! Now...on with the news!

Congratulations WNEP Colleagues! Our Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program has been named the recipient of the 2008 Regent Academic Staff Program Excellence Award. WNEP was selected from among nominees from all other UW System institutions! This award is in recognition of the contributions of all colleagues who are a part of WNEP.

The Award will officially be presented at the August 22 UW System Regents Meeting in Madison. We will have the opportunity to celebrate this grand occasion at our September all-colleague meeting when the award ceremony will be reenacted by one of the Regents and presented to our own Western District WNEP staff! We look forward to honoring these colleagues for this significant and well-deserved recognition.

NEW! District Professional Development Fund Guidelines.

Thanks to Randy Knapp, Chris Viau, Kristen Bruder, and Jim Faust for joining me in a discussion related to the allocation of district professional development funds. This meeting was in response to feedback generated at the January 2008 district meeting when attendees participated in small group discussions related to district communications, resources, etc. This input has provided me with valuable guidance throughout my first months of serving you. Following are the guidelines that have now been established for Western District professional development funds:

- County-based educators and WNEP coordinators may request funding support for professional development through the district office. (WNEP educators and other grant-funded staff typically have training funds available to them through their grant program budget.)
- *A maximum of \$1,000 may be requested over a three year period*, based on the state fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). The first funding cycle will run from July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2011
- Maximum per request is \$1,000
- Staff are encouraged to leverage resources in addition to district funds to support professional development, but it is not required in order to request district funds
- It is important to note that district professional development funds are limited and the budget will only be able to support a limited number of \$1,000 requests in a year. Please do your best to plan ahead and get your requests in to the district office as early as possible in the year. Requests will be approved on a first-come, first-served basis.
- The form to request funding is at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/dist/western/profdev.html>
- Special circumstances that may not meet these guidelines may still be forwarded to the District Director for consideration on a case-by-case basis.

I think the discussion generated by this group of colleagues led to a creative solution that provides greater flexibility for staff. Please also note that those colleagues utilizing these funds may be called upon to share the education they receive with the district to maximize the benefits of the funding. Please follow the proper procedures for requesting funds by visiting the link above. Thank you!

Knock Knock! Who's There? Possibly the Chancellor or a member of the Board of Regents...that's who! Chancellor Wilson has expressed interest in stopping into county offices while he is on his travels around the state. He also wants to encourage the Board of Regents to visit county Extension offices much like they stop in on the campuses. These would likely be unannounced visits. The intent is NOT to evaluate your office or put anyone "on the spot". The Chancellor is simply interested in continuing to get to know our county offices and wants to thank you personally for the excellent work that you are doing. We have communicated with the Chancellor through Yvonne Horton the likelihood of staff being out of the office doing programs in the field should he stop by unannounced. She has provided him with a list of county addresses/phone numbers and suggested a courtesy call to the office first. This may or may not occur. This is nothing to get concerned about. I simply wanted to make you aware that you should not be surprised if the Chancellor or a Regent shows up in your office someday. Please let the district office know if this should occur.

New Information System Development. As you have probably heard, we are at the pre-planning phase of planning and development of a new information system. This system will be inclusive of a new planning and reporting system...but it will be much more than that. Greg Johll and Larry Jones have been laying the groundwork for this massive project and a planning team is now in formation. Following are a few points to clarify where this project currently stands:

- The process for identifying planning team members has begun. The Western District will have representation on this planning team. In addition, I will be the District Director serving on the team.
- There will be many opportunities for input into the process through our district colleagues serving on the planning team and via other communication vehicles.
- This is not a redesign of the current system. It is an attempt at creating a new system that better aligns with the way we do our work.

- The specific functionality has NOT been defined. That is a purpose of the planning process. Quite often Greg gets a question like, "Will it be able to do X?" Where x is some specific task, e.g. civil rights review process.
- The goal is to have the new system installation completed to begin use in January 2010
- More information may be shared at our September district meeting during a dialogue with Rick Klemme and Larry Jones

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People Course Coming Soon! Larry Jones has announced that the 7 Habits course will be offered in December. Information can be found on the PD&E website: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/leadership/4day.html>. Check out this in-depth opportunity for personal and professional growth!

Connecting with Senator Vinehout. Senator Kathleen Vinehout is a strong supporter of Cooperative Extension and is interested in learning about more of our programs in her district so she can use us as a resource for her constituents. Rosemary Potter is working with the Senator's office to set up a meeting with Senator Vinehout and Cooperative Extension educators here in her district. This would be an opportunity for us to showcase some of your key programs that would be most relevant to her constituents. I will let you know as soon as we have a "green light" from Rosemary Potter to begin planning such an event. It is my hope that this might lay the groundwork to strengthen relationships with other legislators representing counties in our district.

Speaking of Legislators... I know that many offices have them on your mailing lists for certain programs, etc. But there's nothing like the "personal touch". I know that it is difficult as a county educator to find time to connect personally with your legislators. When I was working in the Central District and in Madison frequently, I would on occasion stop by the capital and briefly visit with legislative staff serving Jackson County while personally delivering materials such as our annual report, etc. If I can help build a bridge for you by making these personal connections with your legislators and their staff when I am in Madison, I am happy to do this for you. Feel free to send me copies of anything that you want shared personally with your legislators...annual reports, program announcements, success stories, etc. I'll hike them up to the capital and help give a "face" to Cooperative Extension in their districts. Of course, this should not replace your efforts to communicate your program impacts to legislators.

Share Your Work! We are making significant progress on getting our district website updated. (Have you checked it out lately??? <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/dist/western/>) Please help to make this a valuable tool for all Western District colleagues by electronically forwarding your annual reports, county marketing publications, county office newsletters...anything you're willing to share publicly...for posting on our website. Thank you!

September All-Colleague Meeting. On-line registration will be available next week. As previously announced, the cost will be \$10 per person with the district office covering the remainder of the cost. Stay tuned for a message from Liz when the site is ready. Please note that there is a place for you to indicate how many parking passes your office will need. We have received the passes from UW-Stout and will mail them to each county office as your registrations are received. A great day is shaping up...stay tuned for details!

Update on District Positions:

- Clark Co Agriculture: We are pleased to be welcoming Richard Halopka as the new Clark Co Agriculture Agent specializing in crops and soils. Richard's first day in the office will be September 2. You can give him a welcome call at 715-743-5121.
- Barron-Chippewa-Dunn WNEP Coordinator: Preliminary interviews were successfully conducted on August 13 with several strong candidates advancing to the finals scheduled for Sept 3.
- Clark Co Family Living: This position closes on September 9. Preliminary interviews are scheduled for September 30 at the district office and finals for October 13.

Important dates to remember!

- August 26: Chancellor's visit to Chippewa and Barron Counties
- September 3, 9:30 a.m.: District Reps WisLine
- September 8, 9:00 a.m.: Dean's WisLine
- September 16, 9:30 a.m.: District All-Colleague meeting at UW-Stout
- No district WisLine in September!! ☺
- October 6, 9:00 a.m.: Dean's WisLine
- October 6, 10:00 a.m.: District Resource Management Team meeting; location TBA

In Closing:

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.” Dr. Seuss, The Lorax

Please know that your counties are better places to live, work, and raise a family because of the care with which you serve your communities with your transformational education. I can't say thank you enough...

The school bells are about to ring in a new school year which is a sign that fall will soon be here. Enjoy the remainder of the summer and a positive start to the new academic year!

Deb