

Western District Digest

July 2008

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

Colleagues: These past few weeks have provided great opportunities for me to travel the district and visit many of you in your county "homes". I was able to complete my visits to counties and am ready to start "round two"! I have been motivated and impressed by the strong sense of "team" that I have experienced in many of our offices. RBC is alive and well in the West!

As I look to the fall that is creeping up on us, there is a lot that will be happening. I'm looking forward to working in partnership with many of you as we work to strengthen our district network and move forward on some of our initiatives.

Your Input Needed on 2008-09 District Meetings! I have spoken with a few of you regarding the format for our district meetings and I'd like to take time on our July district WisLine to ask each staff to "weigh-in" with your ideas and preferences. In past years, district meetings (other than Sept and Feb) have started with a one-hour gathering of all staff together followed by break-outs by program area for the remainder of the day. Some options are below for you to consider...feel free to contribute additional suggestions so we can come to the best decision and make our district meetings and WisLines as productive and efficient as possible.

- Eliminate the one-hour all-staff gathering at the beginning of district meetings; allow the entire day for program area meetings. (The district office would continue to make room arrangements at a central location in the district.) Continue monthly WisLines.
- Continue the one-hour staff meeting at the beginning of district meetings in those months that all program areas are in attendance. Cancel the monthly district WisLine during these months.
- Continue the one-hour staff meeting at the beginning of all district meetings, regardless of whether or not all program areas are in attendance. WisLines??
- If the one-hour staff meeting continues, what are your suggestions for making this time the most valuable to you?
 - Scholarship presentations across all program areas
 - Time to work on advancing district priorities (perhaps picking up on the strategic planning begun a few years ago...see the note on marketing below)
 - Networking and district team-building activities
 - Other ideas...
- Please share input from your staff on Monday during our county check-in at the beginning of the WisLine. Thank you!

Western District Marketing Project. I'm pleased to say that we are back on track to move our district marketing effort forward with all of the proper paperwork having been submitted to the purchasing officer in Madison. The plan is to contract with a marketing firm to work with us in developing a brand identity, conducting market research, staff training, and planning and conducting a marketing/public awareness campaign. Carl Duley, Amy Schanhofer, Frank Ginther, and Chuck Prissel were the team who got the original project rolling and it's thanks to them that we are able to move forward. We will be engaged in some activities and dialogue at our September all-staff meeting that will help to lay some more groundwork

for this project.

District Office Meeting Space. Although there are still plenty of boxes to be unpacked, we are starting to feel settled in here in the Black River Falls office. You are welcome here at anytime if you need a small group meeting location. We have a meeting table that can seat 6-8 people as well as access to a computer, internet, and phone. Call or e-mail Liz if you'd like to use the meeting space. A number of district colleagues have been here and all would agree that we've come a long way from our Neillsville digs! (Remind us to show you where the cat fell through our ceiling...) ☺

February All-Colleague Meeting. "Crucial Conversations" is the topic of our February district meetings which will be held in four different locations throughout the state. For information on the program and the tentative agenda visit the district website at:

<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/dist/western/documents/Feb2009CrucialConversationsTraining0209.pdf>

There will be two locations convenient for Western District staff. Tuesday, February 17, we will be conducting the program in Warrens at the Three Bears Lodge. Wednesday, February 17, will be held at UW-Barron in Rice Lake. There are two additional locations listed on the website. Offices are encouraged to attend on the same day in the same location if possible. County support staff, paraprofessional staff, AmeriCorps/VISTA etc are very welcome and encouraged to participate in this program! This is one more step in our quest toward RBC. If anyone is interested prior to February, we have the Crucial Conversations audiobook in the district library. E-mail Liz if you'd like to borrow it.

ESP Professional Development Grants. Could you use *extra funding* for your professional development goals in the coming year? Have you applied for an Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP) professional development grant?? August 1 is the deadline for this round of applications. The application information and form can be found at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/esp/committees/grants.html> Please get one copy of your application to the district office as soon as possible so I can sign and send along to Bob Cropp, ESP grants committee chairperson. Don't miss out on this opportunity...you do not need to be a member of ESP to be eligible for these funds!

Puentes/Bridges Program. The Puentes/Bridges Mexico immersion opportunity is a professional development program for Cooperative Extension colleagues and community partners. The program will be conducted Nov. 28-Dec. 7, 2008. The deadline for applications is Aug. 15, 2008. To read about the program and how to apply go to: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/latino/general/puentes.cfm>

Update on District Positions:

- Clark Co Agriculture: We are in the process of completing final interviews from our second posting of this position.
- Clark Co Family Living: The Extension Committee fully supported the re-filling of this position. Paperwork has been submitted and it is anticipated that the position will be posted sometime in August.
- Barron-Chippewa-Dunn WNEP Coordinator: Preliminary interviews are scheduled for August 13 at the District Office with finals to follow on Sept 3 in Dunn County.

Important dates to remember!

- July 28; District WisLine; 9:00 a.m.
- August 4; Dean's WisLine; 9:00 a.m.
- August 13; WNEP Coordinator Preliminary Interviews; District Office
- August 25; District WisLine; 9:00 a.m.
- August 26; Chancellor's visit to Chippewa County

Closing Thoughts:

Gandhi said, "There is more to life than simply increasing its speed." In these times of diminishing resources, and increasing demands both personally and professionally, the speed of life can seem to be out of control. Remember that your own personal renewal is important and that slowing down your pace, taking time to do the things that give you the most joy, and keeping family and friends as your priority relationships will help you keep perspective...yes, there's more to life than your Extension career! It's a great time to remember this and take advantage of the great Wisconsin summer.

Enjoy! Thank you for your many contributions!

Deb