

Western District Digest

June 2008

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

Colleagues:

I was telling the department heads during our WisLine a couple of days ago that being the District Director is like viewing our district from an eagle's nest. The opportunity I have to look broadly throughout the district and observe all of the powerful educational programs that are transforming people and their communities in this part of Wisconsin is amazing. As each month passes, I become more and more proud to be serving as your District Director. Your work motivates me each day to commit to serving you to the very best of my ability. To this end, I count on you to provide me with feedback and to contact me whenever I can assist you.

We will be headed down some rocky budget roads in the next few months. Remember that what you do changes lives...and that is a story worth telling, confidently, all year long. It is also worthy of funding support from our county partners. We just need to continue communicating our relevance to county government. In order that I might better support your communication efforts, I would ask for your continuing invitations to visit your county Extension oversight committees and to meet other key stakeholders. I want to continue building trusting relationships with these individuals so that we can have the "tough" discussions while still maintaining positive relationships between the partners. During this first year...and hopefully beyond that...I would like to be highly visible to our county partners. I have appreciated your many invitations.

Welcome new colleagues! One of the great joys of my job is interviewing and hiring our new Cooperative Extension colleagues. Please join me in welcoming these new colleagues to the Western District.

- **Sara Medick** began as the new 4-H Youth Development Agent in Clark County on May 27. She recently completed her Master's degree at UW-RF. She has worked as a Program Assistant with Frank Ginther in Pierce County and as a summer assistant with Connie Creighton in Portage County.
- We are waiting for a signed appointment letter to announce the new Horticulture Educator in Eau Claire County. She will begin her position on Wednesday, June 11.
- **Daniel Zerr** begins as the new Basin Educator for the Lower Chippewa river basin on Monday, June 16. Daniel has most recently been working with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment on nonpoint source issues.
- **Marie Witzel** is "returning home" to the Western District on July 1 when she will begin her appointment as the 4-H Youth Development Agent in St Croix County. Marie previously served as 4-H Agent in Barron County before assuming the 4-H Agent position in Sheboygan County. We are glad to have her return to the west!

Kudos. Well...we have officially reached "kudo overload" and it would take pages to acknowledge all of the great accomplishments and recognitions from the past few months. In order to properly recognize colleagues, stay tuned to a developing new section of our district website where all of our staff accomplishments can be posted.

Innovative Grants Awarded. The District Resource Management Team reviewed and awarded eight innovative grants. Thanks to everyone who submitted a proposal. An extra big "thanks" to the DRMT

colleagues for the time and thoughtful discussion into the review process. The recipients are (drum roll, please...):

- Pierce, Buffalo, Pepin Service Learning Trip; Project Lead - Frank Ginther; Awarded \$500
- Eau Claire County Hunger Project; Project Lead - Julie Keown-Bomar; Awarded \$1,000
- Family Fun Cooking School; Project Lead - Mary Lestrud; Awarded \$564
- YELL; Project Lead - Laura Petterson; Awarded \$500
- St. Croix Valley Parent Web Site; Project Lead - Joan Sprain; Awarded \$740
- Creative Communications Conference; Project Lead - Chris Viau; Awarded \$800
- Everyday Wellness Tools for Law Enforcement; Project Lead - Mary Wood; Awarded \$1,000
- Healthy, Safe, Lasting Relationships; Project Lead - Gail Peavey; Awarded \$500

Stay tuned to learn more about these projects in upcoming district meetings!

Faculty Recruitment and Retention Funds. In an e-mail sent by Dean Klemme on 5/18, he announced the availability of \$72,000 in faculty recruitment and retention funds. He also outlined the process for applying to be considered to receive some of these funds. If you are a faculty member and have salary concerns, you are encouraged to submit a request to the district office. A letter addressing the points in Rick's e-mail message is the main item needed. You should also include salary study information demonstrating that your salary is below the market for comparable positions; a statement from your department head indicating county budget support for the increase and acceptable job performance; and the date you would like the increase to be effective (July 1, 2008 or January 1, 2009). Send your materials to me in the district office by June 15. I will add the required statement regarding performance before materials are forwarded to the dean's office.

Simultaneous Interpretation Equipment. The Program Directors and District Directors recently participated in a demonstration of simultaneous interpretation equipment owned by Dane County. This equipment allows an educator to teach to a multi-lingual audience while the non-English speakers simultaneously receive the information via an interpreter through a set of headphones. Educators need to arrange for an interpreter to work at their programs (plans are to develop a resource list of interpreters for the state to make this easier); interpreters are currently paid for through the program areas. We anticipate each district receiving a set of this equipment. This will make it possible for our non-English speaking clients to engage fully in our programs and receive the information in their native language. If you have programs that you currently conduct with multi-lingual audiences or if you believe there is future potential of this, let me know if access to simultaneous interpretation equipment would be of interest to you. The equipment could be housed anywhere that would provide the greatest convenience to the district. This is one more effort to be inclusive and provide access to all community members to Extension education! Let me know of your interest.

Critical Incidents in the Workplace. As a follow-up to Mike Hallenbeck's comments on the Dean's June 2 WisLine, this is a reminder to check with your county to learn who your local community emergency planning team is and if there are any established procedures for dealing with potential situations involving avenger violence. Extension will be studying this issue further and you can expect to see staff training efforts offered in the future. In a presentation to CEAC, Mike shared the following points for preventing major incidents from occurring:

- Education of staff
- Threat assessment teams (these are being put in place on all campuses; reports of concern go to this team for assessment)
- Foster awareness, not alarm.

He summed up several points related to potential avenger violence:

- You are not expected to assess threats alone!
- When in doubt, *CONSULT!*
- When NOT in doubt, *CONSULT!*
- When it comes to threats, no question is silly
- You are not alone!

The "bottom line"? Learn who your local emergency planning team is and what your county protocol is in the event of a potential or real avenger threat. And stay tuned for further information and training for Extension staff on this issue. If you'd ever like to consult with someone on a perceived or real threat, you can call Mike Hallenbeck at 608-265-5127.

Important dates to remember!

- June 15; Faculty Recruitment and Retention requests due to the district office
- June 17-18; State WACEC Conference; Stevens Point
- June 19; Clark County Crops and Soils Agent prelims; Black River Falls
- June 23; District WisLine; 9:00 a.m.
- June 25-26; WNEP conference; Appleton
- June 30; District program reps WisLine; 1:30
- July 7; Dean's WisLine; 9:00 a.m.
- July 10; Clark County Crops and Soils Agent finals; Neillsville
- July 15-17; Farm Technology Days; Green Bay
- July 28; District WisLine; 9:00 a.m.

Finally, it's good to see that so many of you are using your vacation time to get away and renew. I encourage everyone to make use of this benefit and use your vacation to spend time doing those things you most enjoy with the people that are most important to you.

Thank you for all of your excellent efforts in support of our organization's mission! Let me know how I can serve you in these efforts!

Deb