

## **UW-Extension Offers Proactive Education, Saving County Resources**

### ***UWEX Helps Create Communities Where Youth and Families are Healthy and Successful***

**Situation:** Each youth in the juvenile justice system cost taxpayers in excess of \$60,000 a year.

**Response:** Numerous studies have been conducted over the last 15 years to measure what youth gain through participation in the 4-H program. It has been proven that youth involved in the 4-H program are less likely than other kids to shoplift or steal, use illegal drugs, ride in a car with someone else who has been drinking, smoke cigarettes, damage property and skip school.

4-H youth are more socially competent and more likely than other youth to develop practical skills needed to become capable and contributing adults. (Colorado State University, 2005; Montana State University, 2002; National 4-H Impact Assessment Project, 2000; Cornell University, 1999)

**Situation:** The St. Croix Co. Department of Health and Human Services identified tobacco, alcohol and other drug use especially methamphetamines as a high priority issues to address. St. Croix County has experienced what some call a “meth epidemic” over burdening the courts, jail and health and human service departments.

**Response:** UWEX serves on the County Meth Committee, connecting meth prevention programs and UW resources. Strengthening Families, a program for parents of youth 10-14 is one example. An analysis by researchers from the Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute found a return of \$9.60 for every dollar spent implementing the Strengthening Families Program.

**Situation:** Obesity in children and adults is contributing to rising costs for county and other health care plans. A recent body mass index screening completed in New Richmond and Glenwood City found that over half of the youth were overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.

**Response:** UWEX provides nutrition counseling for parents and children, sponsors evening “healthy cooking” classes, and provides educational programming for parents regarding practical solutions for reducing obesity.

### ***UWEX Provides Resources to Attract and Support Local Businesses and Entrepreneurs to Create Jobs and Manage Economic Growth***

**Situation:** Many farmers want to pass their business on to the next generation but are finding it difficult to manage the transfer of assets in an equitable manner.

**Response:** UWEX delivers estate planning workshops to provide farmers the resources needed to assess their business and identify strategies to allow the transfer of the business so that it can stay in the family and benefit current and future generations.

**Situation:** Many local small business owners and entrepreneurs have questions about expanding or starting a business but lack the knowledge about how to get it done.

**Response:** UWEX works cooperatively with the Small Business Development Center at UW-River Falls to counsel entrepreneurs and small business owners in Hudson and New Richmond. 85 clients were counseled in 2006 which represents 19% of all counseling sessions statewide. UWEX is also playing a role in developing a county-wide inventors and entrepreneurs club called I-94 BizNetwork to provide peer and mentoring support for individuals who have an idea for a new product or business.

**Response:** UWEX provided 110 small farm direct market entrepreneurs with workshops and counseling. These producers will add to the diversity of the local economy and help to develop a stronger “local food system”.

**Situation:** UWEX completed a business market analysis for the New Richmond area in 2003. The New Richmond Area Economic Development Corporation is not able to use the analysis to attract new business because it is out of date given recent transportation and business changes in the area.

**Response:** UWEX will work with the Center for Community Economic Development to update the analysis using current data. Total cost of this service if provided by a private firm could exceed \$15,000.

**Situation:** St. Croix County is one of the fastest growing counties in WI. As land changes from farmland to urban/suburban development, environmental quality becomes significantly more complex. New land owners are often unsure how to best maintain their properties.

**Response:** UWEX has provided nearly 500 county residents and commercial ornamental businesses with advice on how to best maintain their landscape in an environmentally sound manner.

**Situation:** Due to our proximity to the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area, St. Croix Valley businesses and the programs that support them are not always on state legislators' radar screen.

**Response:** In 2005 UWEX and the economic development corporations from Polk, St. Croix, and Pierce counties joined forces to form its first annual legislative advocacy event in Madison on March 8-9, 2006. On February 13-14, 2007 about 45 leaders from St. Croix, Polk, and Pierce counties participated in the second annual United St. Croix Valley Legislative Days in Madison. Many legislators encouraged the leaders from the St. Croix Valley to continue their annual journey to Madison with legislative issues. They said this was far more important to hear from citizens than professional lobbyists.

### ***UWEX Provides Resources to the Local Farming Community to Help Make Producers Profitable and Sustainable***

**Situation:** Agriculture is a major economic force in St. Croix County. It accounts for \$524.4 million in economic activity, 13.6% of the workforce, contributes \$142.3 million to the county's total income and pays \$15.1 million in taxes. Producers are continuously seeking non-biased educational information regarding crop and dairy and livestock production techniques and farm management issues to remain profitable.

**Response:** In 2006 UWEX has assisted fourteen dairy and livestock producers develop a business plan. Based on the plans three started farming, two switched desired enterprise and seven decided not to start farming.

Twenty-seven agricultural producers involved in 2005-06 UWEX educational programs have learned how to develop business plans.

Sixty-three of eighty agricultural lenders participating in the Western Wisconsin Ag Lenders Conference reported learning information they would use with their clientele.

In 2006, 33 agricultural producers reported learning basic concepts for developing a farm business arrangement or estate plan after attending a UWEX educational program featuring UWEX farm tax management and farm business arrangement specialist. Five producers met with the specialist for more in depth information via teleconference in the UWEX office.

Annually the UWEX agriculture agent helps 15-30 producers determine their cost of production. This information is used to help producer's make future decisions. As one noted, "Before we started determining our cost of production we just farmed and hoped things would work out. Now we can identify all the business enterprises, determine profitability, and address change to improve business performance. By developing the vision statement gives us some direction for our lives and business."

Four dairy producers have increased their income \$74,113 by participating in the dairy milk quality program Milk Money.

**Situation:** In 2006, areas of Western Wisconsin including St. Croix County experienced a drought. Producers had concerns relating to corn, corn silage, hay and soybean production.

**Response:** UWEX coordinated and taught a drought meeting attended by over 125 meeting St. Croix producers. This agent responded to over 66 calls and farm visits regarding corn, corn silage and alfalfa production issues.

UWEX also conducted a Crop Care Field Clinic regarding soybeans. At the clinic, Eileen Cullen, UWEX entomologist, found two spotted spider mites in the fields. This was the first that any of the 75 plus crop producers knew of this insect. This became a major topic of discussion in regards to scouting and treatment recommendations. After the field day this agent responded to eighteen calls regarding the spider mites and treatment recommendations. Most resulted in field visits.

## **UW-Extension Maximizes the County Budget by Supporting Other County Departments**

### ***Planning and Zoning Department***

**Situation:** Wisconsin comprehensive planning legislation provides the framework for developing comprehensive plans, a grant program, and a connection to other planning related actions to provide overall consistency with the plan developed by the local community. Towns are required to develop a comprehensive plan by 2010 if they intend to make any decisions affecting land use within their jurisdictions.

**Response:** UWEX staff worked closely with the Planning and Zoning Department staff to complete 2006 Heartland Comprehensive Plan which is a compilation of plans from the Towns of Baldwin, Cylon, Hammond, Pleasant Valley, and Stanton. Comprehensive Planning Workshops organized by UWEX continue to provide support and additional educational opportunities for town board and plan commission members.

**Situation:** The rapid growth of St. Croix County has resulted in new people from primarily urban communities moving into rural areas. Town boards expressed a need to welcome these new residents and communicate how living in a rural area differs from an urban community

**Response:** A Rural Living Guide was developed as a cooperative effort between UWEX and St. Croix County Planning and Zoning Department to help area towns convey basic rural information to new “urban” residents. An insert was developed for the guide so each town could provide detailed information specific to their town. St. Croix County dispersed copies of the guide to each town according to the number of households. Most towns made the guide and insert available to all residents while some focused only on new residents.

### ***Land and Water Conservation Department***

**Situation:** A clean and dependable supply of groundwater is necessary to maintain a high quality of life and strong economy. Groundwater is particularly important to St. Croix County since it serves as the primary source of water for its residents and industries.

**Response:** A well water testing program was initiated by UWEX in cooperation with the Land and Water Conservation Department and Public Health. To date, more than 2000 well samples have been tested. The results of the well testing program have driven county-wide groundwater protection strategies and educational efforts.

**Situation:** Due to water quality impacts from phosphorus runoff, farmers are being asked to develop nutrient management plans based on crop need of phosphorus instead of nitrogen.

**Response:** Seven producers participating in a nutrient management program wrote phosphorus based nutrient management plans which saved them \$28,041 in fertilizer costs. They participated in a UWEX and LWCD program teaching producers to write their own nutrient management plans. They received cost sharing of \$3,742.

**Situation:** Dairy producers are expanding their dairy herds resulting in a need for dairy facilities that meet their production needs as well as meet WDATCP and DNR standards for runoff control.

**Response:** In 2004-06 UWEX and LWCD staff worked with over ten dairy producers in developing concept designs of manure storage systems, runoff control plans and housing facilities valued at over \$1.7 million. Currently they are working with nine dairy producers considering the installation of manure storage, parlor and housing facilities.

### ***Health and Human Services Department***

**Situation:** Public Health is currently working on a strategic plan to better position its resources to address future community needs. Existing strategies are based primarily on internal input and lack public input.

**Response:** UWEX, in cooperation with staff from State Department of Health and Family Services, will facilitate a process to gather public input. The information will be incorporated into Public Health's strategic plan to assure the needs of the community are served.

**Situation:** Nutrition Education is a mandated service for Women and Infant Children (WIC) clients.

**Response:** The UWEX Nutrition Education Program provides nutrition education at WIC 82 days per year with federal grant dollars, which saves the county dollars in hiring additional Public Health nutrition staff to meet this mandated need. UW Extension teaches approximately 660 families every two months at WIC.

**Situation:** St. Croix County food shelves needed to double their output to the needy in 2006 in part due the fact that the county has one of highest self-sufficiency wage rates in Wisconsin. A 2007 survey of 441 St. Croix County low-income families with children, 97 families (22%) expressed that they were hungry but couldn't eat at times during the past year because they didn't have money for food. Forty percent of adults were skipping meals so that children could eat. Over half the families couldn't afford to eat balanced meals

**Response:** The St. Croix Community Garden Project near New Richmond was developed in cooperation with volunteers from the Department of Health and Human Services, the UWEX Master Gardeners and UW-Extension. In 2006 over 4,000 pounds of fresh vegetables were grown and distributed at no cost to local food pantries, homeless shelter, senior centers and WIC sites.

**Response:** UW Extension provides leadership to a coalition that provides food to hungry St. Croix County families including 17,000 pounds of venison per year valued at \$25,500 with solicited grants/donations of \$5344 to support meat processing, other protein valued at \$3791.63, and \$120,000 dollars in SuperValu Food delivered by the semi load three times a year.. All of this food goes to families in need using area food shelves, community meals, WIC programs, Economic Support Programs, etc. Our UW Extension nutrition educator teaches 672 families each year how to stretch their food dollar to provide nutritious food for their families.

### ***St. Croix County Treasurer/Town Treasurers and Clerks***

**Situation:** Many citizens find their property tax bill complicated and difficult to understand. An educational document explaining the property tax bill would help answer many questions received by treasurers and clerks.

**Response:** UWEX will customize a property tax bill insert (already prepared for La Crosse County) that will clearly explain the various components of the property tax bill. The insert can be easily mailed along with the property tax bill or available on the county website.

## **St. Croix County Board**

**Situation:** Newly elected county board members come with a variety of backgrounds and experiences. County board governance benefits from members that understand their roles and responsibilities.

**Response:** UWEX, in cooperation with the County Board Chair, initiated an orientation program for new county board members. The program equips members with information about the powers and duties of county board members so they are better able to be effective county leaders.

## **St. Croix County Jail**

**Situation:** In Wisconsin, only 40 of the more than 3,500 jail staff are categorized as “educational” (representing 1% of all jail staff). In St. Croix Co., there is no one on staff to provide educational programs to help incarcerated adults reenter society.

**Response:** UWEX delivers quarterly money management and parent education classes at the St. Croix County jail.

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