

Western District Digest

May 2009

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

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Colleagues:

It has been a long while since the last "Digest". During these months I have had the opportunity to participate in state-wide program area conferences for WNEP, CNRED, and 4-H. I've taken in the JCEP conference, state department head conference, and the Urban Conference to name a few. One thing is clear...the Western District is gifted with many great leaders as our colleagues have had significant roles in the planning of many of these high-quality events. These conferences are also an opportunity for me to learn more about the initiatives throughout all of the program areas. I continue to be amazed at the caliber of our programs and the impact they are having on the lives of people in our communities.



WNEP Coordinators at their state conference



Now more than ever, we must never let an opportunity pass us by to communicate how Extension education is a catalyst for transformation in our youth, families, communities, organizations, and businesses. And why wait for the opportunity...let's see if we can create some! On that note, those of you who attended the May district meeting had the opportunity to get the first peak at the new brand identity being developed for UW-Extension, Cooperative Extension here in the Western District! The full roll-out of the campaign will take place at our September district all-colleague meeting. The creative concept is "Caring for the Faces and Spaces of Western Wisconsin". I couldn't have said it better myself!

Here are some important updates...

Colleague Transitions. Recent and upcoming transitions among our Western District colleagues...

- **Audrey Held.** WNEP educator in Barron County, announced her upcoming retirement on July 3. Her last day in the office was May 11. We wish Audrey a happy and healthy new life phase!
- **Linda Heppner.** Family Living educator in Barron County, will also retire on July 3. Her last day in the office will be June 15. Linda has served in Extension for more than 36 years...she has earned

Linda Heppner prepares to ride off into the sunset! We wish her all the best!



her retirement and we all wish for her the very best life has to offer! ☺

- **Chris Viau**, Dunn County 4-H Youth Development Agent, will begin as the new Wood County 4-H Agent on June 1. Chris' last day in the office was Friday, May 15. Chris' new office will now actually be closer to the Western District Office than Dunn County was...so we'll be keeping a close eye on him! The county has approved filling the vacancy and we will proceed as soon as possible after the hiring suspension is lifted.
- **Laura Pettersen** will be permanently continuing her full-time state appointment with Operation Military Kids. **Dori Stowell** will be continuing in her interim role in Monroe County through the first three weeks in June. We are planning for longer-term interim coverage until we can fill the vacancy.

Our NEW District VISTA Team: Beginning in June, our district will welcome four AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers. Clark and Eau Claire Counties will each host a Summer Associate who will give about 8 weeks of full-time service. They will be primarily working with community garden projects. Barron County will host a year-long VISTA who will serve a multi-county project in community gardening and local foods. Dunn and Pierce Counties will be sharing our fourth VISTA who will serve full-time for a year working to expand the outreach of 4-H programs and building sustainability for family living programs. Additionally, these VISTAs will support our district-wide marketing initiative. We look forward to the enthusiasm and resources these new colleagues will bring to our district! Thanks to **Tim Jergensen, Kristen Bruder, Frank Ginther, Erin LaFaive, and Julie Simek** for applying for this district "first"!

Innovative Grant Awards: Congratulations to a number of our colleagues who were selected by the District Resource Management Team to receive district innovative grant awards for 2009-2010! The selected projects are:

- **Mary Lestrud:** "Regional In-Service for WNEP Staff"; \$580
- **Bob Kazmierski:** "Polk County Local Food Guide"; \$1,000
- **Jackie Johnson:** "50 Ways to Use Your Noodle"; \$800
- **Megan Stuessel:** "Y.E.L.L. - Youth Engaged in Learning"; \$200
- **Erin LaFaive:** "EnAct Steps to Greener Living: Citizen Led Sustainability in Eau Claire County"; \$959
- **Marie Ritscher:** "Elementary School Garden Pilot Project"; \$500
- **Nancy Coffey:** "Eau Claire County Community Resource Directory"; \$500
- **Julie Simek:** "Neillsville Community Garden"; \$500

Project leaders should have received information from Liz on invoicing the district office to receive your funds. A description of the selected projects will be posted on our district on the District Resource Management page. Congratulations!

State Budget. As you are aware, the state budget saga continues. At this point I know as much about the situation as you do. Rick Klemme has been excellent at communicating information as it is revealed to him and we can trust him to continue to do so. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me and I'll do what I can to find an answer for you. Details on furlough's, etc will be forthcoming as soon as possible. This leads me to the next issue...

What About Staff Retention Funds?? The most recent update from UW System on proposed cuts and challenges did not include the elimination of the retention funds. While it's still possible we could see a change in this pool of funds, at this point we are proceeding with accepting requests for salary adjustments. A few points to guide you in this process...

- The process to request a salary adjustment is relatively simple and requires only a letter from you to be sent to me in the district office. In your letter you should state the following:
 - Why you believe there is a retention problem
 - Evidence that your current salary is below the market for comparable positions in your area

- A statement indicating support of the county partner to contribute 40% of any salary increase awarded.
- The dollar amount you are requesting (minimum award will be \$1,000).
- The date you are requesting the adjustment to be effective (July 1, 2009 or January 1, 2010)
- I would also request a statement from your Department Head (e-mail is fine) indicating their support for your request and the availability of funding in your county budget.
- You do NOT need to request a statement from me regarding your performance. I will add my statement to the report I send to the Dean's office.
- Please send all requests via e-mail attachment so they can be readily forwarded to the Dean's office.
- NOTE! This year's funds are available to a greater number of our colleagues, including instructional academic staff (e.g. Nutrition Coordinators and Extension Associates) and faculty (including Instructors).
- If you are uncertain as to whether or not your classification makes you eligible for these funds, contact the district office.
- If you applied for funds last year, simply update your request and forward it on to me.
- Complete information on these retention resources was e-mailed from Rick Klemme on April 20.

Resources From Our Director of Government Relations, Rosemary Potter: Now more than ever it is important that our state legislators understand the value of our education in Wisconsin communities. Many of our legislators say that they do not hear from constituents about Extension. We might think, "no news is good news". But if you happen to be a legislator, they will tell you that hearing from constituents is critical in helping them determine their position on an issue.

Rosemary Potter has created a very valuable website at <http://uwex.uwc.edu/government/>. There you will find the most recent state budget updates and information on the budget process, as well as a myriad of other resources. Rosemary also created an "advocacy" page (uncomfortable word to us, I know!). Check out <http://uwex.uwc.edu/government/advocacy/>. She does an excellent job of describing how Extension employees can communicate with legislators without lobbying. You will find a list of the Joint Finance committee members and contact information on the site. If your clientele wants to know how they can best support UW-Extension during these difficult times, the best way is for them to tell their story to their state legislators and members of the Joint Finance committee (as well as to our local county partners).



Lori Zierl was the guest speaker at Senator Kohl's press conference in April on the credit card amendment.

Rosemary is always available to consult with you. She also would appreciate knowing any time that you have contact with a legislator.



The District 5 WACEC meeting was a lively dialogue among county partners.

State WACEC Conference. Don't forget!! Registrations and lodging reservations are due on May 22...that's today!!! Don't forget to encourage your committee members to comb the highways and byways of your county to come up with some unique auction items to help WACEC raise funds for their trip to PILD...(of course staff donations to the auction are also welcome!) Thanks to our county educators who are serving on the planning committee along with WACEC members: **Mary Campbell-Wood, Karl Green, Karen Joos, Randy Knapp, Monica Lobenstein, Mary Meehan-Strub, Megan Stuessel.** The LaCrosse County staff is also providing significant additional support with programs and the auction and we are grateful for their help!



Colleagues shared programming impacts with the Chancellor's staff in January.

[Chancellor Wilson Letter to County Board Chairpersons.](#) Chancellor Wilson has indicated he will be sending a letter to all county board chairs outlining the UW Colleges and UW-Extension strategic plan. The Dean's office has not yet seen a copy of the letter and I am unsure of his timeline for the mailing. No doubt you will get some questions in your county offices when this communication does arrive. I will pass along any information I receive so you can be prepared should there be questions raised locally. The strategic planning website, including a copy of the plan, is at <http://uwex.uwc.edu/planning/meetings/>

[Update on District Positions:](#) The suspension on hiring continues pending final approval of the state budget. In the meantime, the DDs have discussed with our Human Resources office how we will prioritize and proceed with the hiring process once the suspension is lifted. We expect this will be in August or September at the earliest. The funds accrued during these vacancies will be critical in helping us meet our commitment to the state budget.

[Important dates to remember!](#)

- May 22: Deadline for state WACEC conference registrations and lodging reservations
- June 1, 9:00 a.m.: Dean's WisLine
- June 1: Requests for salary adjustments from retention funds due to District Office
- June 15-16: State WACEC Conference, LaCrosse
- June 16: All Travel Expense Reports, invoices, and revenue/deposits due to District Office for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2009
- June 22, 9:00 a.m.: District WisLine
- June 30, 10:00 a.m.: District Department Head WisLine



Discussions among colleagues at the December Sustainable Energy In-Service

[In Closing:](#)

“You can only become truly accomplished at something you love. Don't make money your goal. Instead, pursue the things you love doing, and then do them so well that people can't take their eyes off you.” Maya Angelo

Let this be our goal...to present our educational programs so well that our communities...our county partners...our state partners...can't take their eyes off of us.

Thank you for all the ways you continue to make the mission of Cooperative Extension come alive! Enjoy the long holiday weekend!

Deb