



The Extension Cord

Connecting Knowledge with Need



JUNE 2008

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Welcome to the Extension Cord

When you think of UW-Extension you may *only* think of farms, fairs and fruit cobbler, but the local gateway to the University of Wisconsin has continually evolved to meet additional community needs. Eau Claire County UW-Extension offers a variety of programs to address emerging issues such as sustainability, environmental stewardship, poverty reduction, after-school programming, positive youth development and

healthy lifestyles for families.

Partnering with more than 100 local community groups and agencies, Eau Claire County Extension office is committed to offering relevant, quality programs to residents. We do so through continuous evaluation of our programs, and assessing the positive impact on learners and participants. In addition, we want to remain accountable by reporting program outcomes to the taxpayers.

Cooperative Extension belongs to all Wisconsin citizens; it is their connection to the resources of the University of Wisconsin. This bi-annual newsletter is meant to connect people with their Eau Claire County Extension faculty and staff. It provides a quick look at some current program outreach and outcomes.

Feel free to contact our office at (715) 839-4712 or drop by the Altoona office to meet your county-based educators and staff.

Bad Medicine Event Nets Unwanted Medications

An event held on April 22 netted 128 pounds of unwanted prescription medication and helped to promote community awareness about prescription drug abuse. Highlighting the severity of abuse, Deputy Chief Eric Larsen of the Eau Claire Police Department said that since 2006 there have been 14 deaths caused by prescription drug overdoses in the Chippewa Valley.

The community event, *Bad Medicine*, featured a panel of seven local experts addressing topics such as legal consequences, drug abuse among youth, and personal experiences with addiction. Sacred Heart Hospital provided a medication disposal drop-off and collection bins were overflowing by the end of the evening. Sixty-three people stayed for the educational forum and an additional

128 lbs of unwanted prescription medications were collected at *Bad Medicine* on April 22.



26 people dropped off unwanted medications.

A former abuser of prescription drugs and drug-court graduate, Jacob Gilbertson, shared his story of snorting Adderall and Ritalin in high school. Describing prescription drug abuse as a real threat, he urged others not to take the same risks he did. Evaluations indicate Gilbertson's messages about addiction and recovery made a huge impact.

UW-Extension Family Living Educator and panelist, Julie Keown-Bomar, discussed family and community strategies for prevention and the need to provide a safe disposal option for residents. She said, "The turnout this evening and the volume of medication disposed of indicates a need for safe and environmentally friendly disposal options."

Keown-Bomar and other community partners helped coordinate the event and future activities are currently being planned. Sponsors included: Eau Claire Coalition for Youth, Lutheran Social Services, Eau Claire County UW-Extension, Leader-Telegram, Juvenile Court Intake, Luther Midelfort, Eau Claire County Restorative Justice Program, Sacred Heart Hospital, and the Eau Claire Area School District.



The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects the demand for engineers to increase by 160,000 or 11 percent from 2006-2016.



"4-H is a community of young people across America who are learning leadership, citizenship and life skills."

Kids & Canines Back for a Third Year

Due to the positive response of youth and their parents in 2006 and 2007, 4-H will again be offering a "Kids & Canines" day camp in June 2008.

The camp is targeted at youth who are not currently 4-H members, and focuses on teaching basic obedience and agility skills, as well as how to care for and train their dog.

Through active participation in the camp with their dog, youth learn about responsible dog ownership, fun activities with their dog, and the 4-H program.

4-H members in the dog project gain leadership skills by serving as teachers, mentors, helpers.

Campers and their dogs experience hands-on practice each day, as well as taking part in a variety of dog related activities including arts and crafts, preparation of healthy snacks, games, and tricks.

In addition, there will be educational presentations on the Canine Good Citizen program, service dogs, grooming, canine health issues, and careers.

This year's camp will include a tour of a boarding and grooming facility. Past camps have included a tour of a veterinary clinic and presentations on tracking and hunting.

4-H members in the Dog Project serve as "buddies" for youth who do not have dogs, but who want to participate in order to gain information and skills for future dog ownership.

The 2008 Kids & Canine Camp will take place June 16 - 18 at the Eau Claire County Exposition Center.

4-H Partners with Eau Claire Middle Schools to Offer a Gateway Academy Summer Camp

The State 4-H program received a grant from the Kern Foundation which will fund camps at ten sites in Wisconsin this summer. The camps are designed for middle school students and will provide opportunities to explore science, engineering and technology. Using problem solving skills, students will complete two projects.

There will be additional activities including a field trip to a

community technology site and an open house where campers will present their projects to parents and professionals.

The curriculum for the camps is part of the "Project Lead the Way" program designed by the Society of Manufacturing Engineers.

The Eau Claire Camp will take place June 23 - 27 in the computer lab at North High School. Eau Claire County 4-H is approved for grant funding

to hold a Gateway Academy camp again in 2009.



Citizenship Building

While citizenship education is a major and continuous focus of the 4-H program, there are some special activities each summer that provide wonderful opportunities for young people to grow leadership and citizenship skills.

Each summer 4-H teens from Eau Claire County attend a week long leadership experience in our Nation's capitol. Citizenship Washington Focus provides high school age 4-H members the opportunity to

meet with their Congressmen and Senators, get involved with simulations of the legislative process, visit important historical sites, and prepare plans for doing citizenship activities when they return.

Another great citizenship experience is the annual community service trip. Youth from Eau Claire County travel to another part of the United States to work on a Habitat for Humanity house. This year's trip is planned for a building

project in Marquette, Michigan.

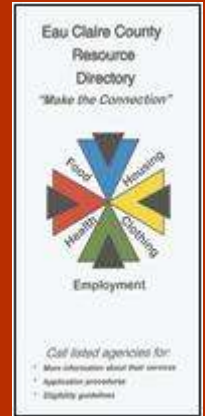
4-H members also gain citizenship skills through the entire year as they learn to conduct business meetings, make group decisions, serve as officers, and plan and carry out community improvement projects. 4-H builds **social capitol** for our communities and prepares youth for their futures as **active and engaged citizens**.

UW-Extension Takes the Lead on Eau Claire County Resource Directory

Do you know someone who needs information on free meals, available food pantries, FoodShare, Badger-Care Plus, or housing and energy assistance. The newly updated Resource Directory lists assistance in the areas of: food and nutrition,

housing and energy, health and dental care, financial services, employment and education, clothing and other services. Also learn how to access 2-1-1 information, support and crisis assistance. Get the newly revised Eau Claire County

Resource Directory at the Extension office. A more detailed, long version of the directory can be accessed at Eau Claire County's website (www.co.eau-claire.wi.us) and click on UW-Extension.



Let's Get Gardening!

Garden Opportunities Available to All County Residents



Community Gardens:

Garden with your family and fellow county residents. Rent a 20' X 50' garden plot at the County's Community Gardens located on Jeffers Road, just off of the North Crossing. There is now water at the site. Rental is \$32 per plot. Stop by the Extension office to get your plot today.

For information contact the Extension office at 839-4712.

Kids' Gardens:

Children pick, eat and increase their love of vegetables at the following parks.

North River Fronts Park, Located on Forest Street
Tuesdays, June 17- August 26
9 AM - 10:30 AM

McDonough Park, through Longfellow Summer Program
Wednesdays, June 18- July 16
10 AM- 11:30 AM

Other Gardens:

Session Street Garden, Mentally disabled residents participate, gain responsibility, eat better and gain another social connection through gardening.

Bolton Refuge House Garden, Lets clients of Bolton Refuge (a shelter for victims of domestic abuse) and their families work together in the garden, develop cooking skills and learn about the importance of vegetable consumption in a safe environment.

To learn more about the garden opportunities listed, contact the Extension office at 839-4712

Food and Fun for Kids this Summer

Free food is available for all children 18 years and under at multiple sites in Eau Claire this summer. No need to sign up. Just come to one of the following locations and enjoy a tasty meal. Coordinated by the Childhood Nutrition Coalition.

Boys & Girls Club

201 E Lake Street (Closed 7/4)
Monday- Friday, June 11- August 28
Breakfast: 8-9 AM
Lunch: 11-30 AM -12:30 PM

Longfellow Elementary

512 Balcom St (Closed 7/3-7/4)
Monday- Thursday, June 16- July 17
Breakfast: 8-8:30 AM
Lunch: 11:45 AM - 12:15 PM

Community Table (in coordination with the Parks & Rec Program)

Afternoon Snacks Delivered:
Monday & Tuesday, 3:30-4:30 PM at Kessler, McDonough & Sundet Parks
Bag Lunches Delivered
Friday, Noon-1 PM
Kessler, McDonough & Sundet Parks

Weekend Kids' Meals Program

(Sponsored by Feed My People Food Bank)

At the end of each week, the Feed My People organization will provide the following to each child for the weekend: 2 breakfast and 2 lunch meals

Note: This program is only available for those involved in the Summer Food Service Program.



Food programs help prevent children from being hungry during the summer months.

Community Strategies for Reducing Poverty



One out of four Eau Claire County residents is low income or poor (U.S. Census 2000).

A county-wide effort on bridging the gaps that prevent many families from getting out of poverty will be the focus of an upcoming community summit. On August 15 participants will gather at the L.E. Phillips Senior Center to focus on Eau Claire County poverty and begin the first community dialogue concentrating on local solutions.

Julie Keown-Bomar and Nancy Coffey, Eau Claire County UW-Extension educators, are working with other community agencies as part of a poverty task force. Keown-Bomar said, "People in communities across the nation are coming together to fill in the gaps that prevent people from moving out of poverty and helping others from falling into poverty."

Eau Claire County ranks 15th out of all Wisconsin counties for poverty- approximately 25% of the population is considered low income or poor. Local research also reveals interrelated poverty issues:

- Eau Claire Area School District's three lowest income elementary schools indicated that 25% of families responding were food insecure and 13% experienced hunger in the past year (2004 UW-Extension Survey).
- Participants in free or reduced school breakfast and lunch participation has increased 69% and 10.12% respectively, from 1999 to 2004.
- In 2006, approximately 1,740 homeless individuals in the county were turned away without receiving services. This figure is an unduplicated count conducted by the Eau Claire County Continuum of Care Consortium.

The task force is a subcommittee originating from the Hunger Prevention Coalition of Eau Claire County. Task Force partners include: Western Dairyland, United Way, Eau Claire Area

School District, UW-Eau Claire, VISTA, Feed My People Food Bank, ECC Department of Human Services, ECC Public Health Department, Beacon House, Free Clinic of Eau Claire, and Eau Claire Coalition for Youth.

Nancy Coffey, has directed group efforts to gather local data about poverty, available services, and barriers preventing less advantaged residents from getting ahead. Once data was collected, task force members wrote a series of issue papers about critical topics and barriers affecting low income residents including food insecurity, transportation, and childcare. Coffey has also coordinated these efforts with Clear Vision, the strategic planning process currently underway in Eau Claire.

The next step is developing a vehicle for community engagement aimed at reducing poverty. Julie Keown-Bomar is coordinating the summit. Those interested in dialoguing and action planning should contact the UW-Extension office at 839-4712.

Parenting Newsletter Sustained through Community Support & Contributions

Thanks for supporting parents in the Eau Claire Area!

Kiwanis Clubs of Eau Claire:

- Golden K
- Clear Water
- Indianhead
- Eau Claire Noon Club
- Early Risers

Eau Claire Community Foundation Donors (2007-2008)

- John & Betsy Kell Family Fund
- Grewe Family Fund
- Society of Founders
- T. Gordon & Gladys P. Keith
- Jack & Lois Postlewaite Family Fund
- Richard T. Gannon Fund
- John Matthew Fesenmaier

Hospitals

- Luther Midelfort
- Sacred Heart

Thank You

Nutrient Management

Eau Claire County farmers have always been concerned about their environment.

Nine years ago a nutrient management program was initiated by the Land Conservation Division and UW-Extension to teach farmers how to write their own nutrient management plans,

Since 1999, over 180 farmers have written their own nutrient management plans under the direction of Gary Osborne (LCD) and Mahlon

Peterson (UWEX). Classes are conducted in May and December and consist of three two-hour sessions. Class members learn about environmental concerns caused by overfertilization, what nutrients crops need, manure production estimates, and the economics of nutrient management. State and federal cost share dollars, grants, and county cost share provide incentives for farmer participation to assist in paying for soil testing and related expenses. Over \$160,000 in grant monies have supported these

efforts. Osborne and Peterson work with their students throughout the process.

Results show cleaner water, less fertilizer use and annual savings of over \$500,000 to the farmers themselves. The county has been a leader in implementing conservation practices and embracing new ideas for years.



Rural Living Day Offers Resources to Residents

One does not have to travel far in the county to see that new homes continue to be built in the rural area. In fact, Eau Claire County UWEX Ag Agent Mahlon Peterson notes, "Eau Claire County has more farms today compared to ten years ago. The increased interest in returning to the land is all around us."

On April 5 a combination of rural residents, landowners, students and people interested in moving to the country attended Eau Claire County's first *Rural Living Day* held at Beaver Creek Reserve.

These participants listened to a variety of topics presented by agency and private company staff relating to living in the country. Dave Carlson from WQOW TV 18 talked about being responsible property owners. Partners in the Rural Living Day included: Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Eau Claire County Land Conservation, Department of Natural Resources, River Country R C & D, USDA Fish & Wildlife Service, Channel 18, Beaver Creek Reserve and UW-Extension.

Planned future events will include hands-on opportunities for those interested in specific topics such as bee keeping, prairie restoration and the like.

Ultimately it would be great to have a Small Farm Center here in western Wisconsin to meet the expanding needs of this audience. The USDA classifies small farms as those with less than \$250,000 of gross farm income.

"Eau Claire County has more farms today compared to ten years ago. The increased interest in returning to the land is all around us."

- Mahlon Peterson, UWEX Ag Agent

The Latest Dirt...

UW-Extension Offers Soil Testing Services

Once again the Extension office is offering soil testing services for yards and fields. Residents can bring their sample(s) to our office during working hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

How to take soil samples?

Take a soil probe, shovel, trowel,

or soil auger and dig down to a depth of 6 inches. Collect around 2 cups worth of soil for each sample.

Where are the samples sent?

We send the samples to the UW-Extension Soils Laboratory at Marshfield. We charge \$12 for

each field sample and \$20 for each lawn or garden sample. Recommendations are made for lime, nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium.

Residents will receive their test results in approximately 10 to 14 days and have the option of having the test results mailed, faxed or emailed to them.





In Brief...

Other Things Going on at the Extension Office

Horticultural Educator Position Soon to Be Filled

With the departure of Tom Kalb in March, the Extension office has been in search of a horticultural educator.

On May 22 Extension Education Committee Members, UWEX Western District Director Deb Jones, and Eau Claire County UWEX educators and staff gathered to conduct interviews with the two final candidates. In addition to the interview, each candidate gave a presentation on horticulture needs and programming for Eau Claire County. The interviews followed with a tour of the various community gardens and the Exposition Center grounds.

The Extension Education Committee met in open session on May 27

and unanimously voted to offer the position to Stephanie Romelczyk.

UWEX in Madison is currently conducting reference checks and will officially offer the position, once those are completed.

Master Gardener Volunteers

In the absence of a horticultural educator, several master gardeners have volunteered their time assisting the Extension office. They have assisted with the Master Gardener Winter Training class, the Community Gardens and the Kids Gardens. In addition, time has been volunteered in the office returning horticultural phone calls. A special thank you goes out to Cindy Hademan, Deb Theusch, Gale Kleppe, Rick Moen, and Eli Gottfried.

UWEX Educators Offer Workshops to Other County Departments

Professional development services provided by UWEX Educators are not only available to county residents, but are also available to other county departments.

Workshops on team building were recently provided to the Sheriff's Department office staff. Educators are currently working with the Parks and Forest Department to schedule sessions on volunteer recruitment/coordination and effective customer service communications.

Departments interested in obtaining these services from the Extension office should contact Mahlon Peterson or Julie Keown-Bomar.



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Extension Staff

- Mahlon Peterson.....Co-Dept. Head/Agricultural Agent
- Julie Keown-Bomar.....Co-Dept. Head/Family Living Agent
- Katy Forsythe.....4-H & Youth Agent
- Mary Cork.....4-H Program Assistant
- Nancy Coffey.....WNEP Coordinator
- Pamela Warren-Armstrong.....WNEP Educator
- Joy Weisner.....WNEP Educator
- Karen Blaeser.....Administrative Assistant
- Michelle Haviland.....Office Associate
- Nikki Jackson.....Office Associate