

Cynthia Muhar  
Family Living Educator  
Milwaukee County UW Extension

### **Summary of Professional Contributions and Scholarship**

Milwaukee County has remarkable assets and strengths, but it also faces many challenges. It is the most populated (915,000) and racially diverse county in Wisconsin. It offers an extensive library system, professional sports teams, and many institutions of higher learning. However, disparities affecting our county include: educational achievement, housing segregation, unemployment rates, teen pregnancy and infant mortality. The City of Milwaukee has the seventh highest poverty rate in the nation. We struggle with many issues which affect the quality of life, particularly for low-income individuals and families. I have struggled with the breadth of my programming, trying to rein it in and give it depth. Prioritizing needs and honing my focus has been difficult. This chronicles the beginning of my professional evolution.

I began my professional career with UW-Extension in the academic staff position of Family and Youth Professional Development Coordinator. This role focused on training staff from family-support agencies to more effectively work with low-income new parents regarding strength-based family-centered services. My previous work experience as an educator for sexuality, parenting, team-building, leadership, and communication served me well in this role. In my new faculty role as Family Living Educator, I had planned to build capacity regarding infant mental health and childhood development, due to an increase in court referrals for families with children under the age of three, with moderate to severe emotional health issues. As it turned out, I had to be very flexible in my role and learn another unrelated topic area.

### **Home Ownership Counseling and Education Program**

At the time I began my role as Milwaukee County UW-Extension's Family Living Educator, the position had been vacant for 21 months and the Financial Management and Housing Education Coordinator (Coordinator) had passed away four months prior. I was asked to assume responsibility for the Home Ownership Counseling Education Program (HOCEP), temporarily, until a new Coordinator was hired. I had no professional experience with housing issues and through a series of unusual circumstances, this role became long-term. I inherited a coalition of local housing experts, the Home Ownership Counseling Education Consortium, who had worked with Milwaukee County UW-Extension, since 1996, to deliver a twice-yearly five-day HOCEP core training for novice home ownership counselors and educators. The Consortium's mission was to "produce proficient home ownership counselors and educators". These counselors and educators assist low-income individuals to purchase their first homes, helping them prepare financially and providing education to help them become savvy, responsible home owners. Home ownership can increase financial stability for individuals and families, through building equity, a financial investment in one's future. Over years, increased equity and annual increases in housing costs provide a home owner with the opportunity to make a profit upon the sale of the home. Home ownership improves neighborhood stability and instills pride in one's community. However, not all people share the same opportunities to be home owners. Challenges to homeownership increase for those: of low-income levels, for people of color, those with less than stellar credit, and those with no, or new, banking relationships. The HOCEP increased the knowledge and skills of home ownership counselors and educators to assist people with such barriers to purchase homes and be responsible home owners.

When I started working with the HOCEP, a new core training curriculum, commissioned to two retired UW-Extension staff members, was being developed. However, the program was already acknowledged by HUD, (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development), WHEDA (Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority), and the Wisconsin Department of Commerce - Division of Housing as satisfaction of professional development criterion for funding grantee agencies. There is no other in-person certificate program, offered by a Wisconsin organization that satisfied staff core training requirements for all of these agencies.

Members of the Consortium, and other statewide housing professionals, served on the HOCEP curriculum advisory committee and as curriculum reviewers. I coordinated the curriculum review and implementation. The first module of the new HOCEP curriculum was ready in early 2005. Module One, Home Ownership Education, includes the following session topics:

1. Adult Learning Principles
2. Why Buy a Home?
3. Are you Financially Prepared to Buy a Home?
4. Understanding Credit
5. Mortgage Lending
6. Shopping for a Home
7. Fair Housing/Fair Lending Laws
8. The Closing Process

After completion of Module 2, in summer, 2005, I assumed the coordination of the curriculum review for this Counseling Education module, as well. This module contains the case study scenarios that participants use in team presentations to local housing experts, as a measurement of program proficiency. My contributions to this module included: organizing a curriculum review work group, scheduling curriculum review sessions, gathering, categorizing, and organizing reviewer feedback to share with authors, piloting the module and revising the case study narratives (*Exhibit 1*) and supporting documentation, based on comments and advice of session participants of two HOCEP workshops.

The entire new program curriculum was piloted in Oct. 2005. Participant feedback was very positive. A four-week post workshop evaluation survey revealed that respondents felt the program was informative, engaging, and relevant to their work (*Exhibit 2*). HOCEP certificates of completion were awarded to those who successfully completed the following three proficiency indicators: accuracy rate of at least 70% on a written test, development and delivery of a team teaching demonstration, and presentation of a case study analysis, reviewed and evaluated by seasoned mortgage lenders and home ownership counselors.

The HOCEP had been marketed to home ownership counselors and educators throughout the state. With input from Marc Smith, UW-Extension Housing Specialist and co-chair of the Family Living state Affordable Housing Team, I developed a statewide electronic professional development needs assessment survey for homeownership counselors and educators. The purposes of the assessment were: 1. to ascertain the most valuable topic sessions in the HOCEP, 2. to determine the ongoing training priorities of home ownership counselors and educators and 3. to establish preferred training delivery methods for statewide agencies. We wanted to improve and build upon the foundation of the HOCEP. The state's Division of Housing and WHEDA distributed the survey in summer, 2006 (*Exhibit 3*). The needs assessment helped us form our training plan for post-purchase programs. Smith and I co-authored a state team grant, to support curriculum development. Before the grant was awarded, Smith had begun exploring a partnership with NeighborWorks of America (NWA), a national training institute for housing agencies' staff. NWA seemed receptive to a potential partnership. The new plan would allow NWA to bring select training institute workshops to different regions of Wisconsin, rather than putting our energy into 'reinventing' a curriculum. This allowed me to attend a national NWA Training Institute in Dallas, TX. (This training plan has been shelved during Smith's leave of absence from his UW-Extension duties.)

What I learned at the NWA Training Institute and from the results of the training needs assessment, led me to approach Beverlee Baker, UW-Extension Racine County Family Living Educator and Department Head, to co-author a UW-Extension Quad Counties grant proposal to support a bi-county program to address predatory lending and foreclosure prevention. I also developed the 10 minute Jeopardy game power point funding presentation (*Exhibit 4*) which engaged active audience participation and helped acquire the funding. Our new Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator was hired in late 2006. She has concentrated her efforts on building capacity to strengthen community resources and work in partnership to develop strategies to address these issues. The Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator position, hired at the earliest stage of the national foreclosure crisis, has proved a valuable addition in both Racine and Milwaukee counties and has put UW-Extension at the forefront of both county and state efforts to combat the issues of predatory lending and foreclosure in our communities.

Another Affordable Housing Team grant, co-authored by Marc Smith and myself (*Exhibit 5*), was submitted to the Family Living Program area in Fall, 2006, to support two housing education initiatives within UW-Extension. The grant secured resources to support: 1. a new home buyer distance education program, leveraged with funds from WHEDA and Mortgage Guaranty Insurance Corporation, and developed in partnership with Green Bay Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc., and 2. a UW-Extension statewide professional development in-service about housing programs being offered through UW-Extension. The new Home Buyer Distance Education program offered a combination of satellite technology and on-site programming, to rural and remote areas of the state where class accessibility was limited. We also developed a workshop to teach UW-Extension educators about the Home Buyer Education Program, the HOCEP, and various housing programs offered by UW-Extension's Affordable Housing team members. Our intent was to raise awareness and interest of educators, provide them with program resources, and to motivate them to support housing initiatives and programs in their own counties (*Exhibit 6*).

In Fall 2007, I developed an electronic survey with Ellen Taylor Powell, UW-Extension Program Evaluation Specialist, and distributed it to HOCEP graduates since 2004. (*Exhibit 7*) The survey purposes were to discover the value of the HOCEP to participants' professional roles as well as to determine some demographic information regarding their client-base. 93% of respondents found the program 'moderately – extremely valuable' to their job roles. 80% of those who completed the survey work with first-time home buyers and 71% concurred that over three-quarters of their clients are low-income.

The HOCEP, developed in partnership with dozens of local, state and federal partners, provided research-based knowledge and engaging workshop activities, as well as opportunities for participants to demonstrate proficiencies regarding subject matter and acquired skills. Participants have reported its value to their job roles, both during and after, their participation in the program. Class polls indicated that home ownership counselors assisted an average of 20 individuals and families buy homes annually. Approximately 300 home ownership counselors and educators successfully completed the HOCEP. It has helped thousands of Wisconsin home buyers purchase their first homes during the ten years it was in existence.

Unfortunately, due to a combination of circumstances, this program was dismantled in 2007. Issues of conflict had plagued the Consortium and my attempts to unite the group through strategic planning sessions, facilitated by my past Milwaukee County UW-Extension office director and former Community Resource Development educator, Ronnie Stricklin, were unsuccessful. In November, 2006, I tendered my resignation with the Consortium. I indicated my willingness to continue in my role as the HOCEP Training Coordinator, but no longer as a member of the Consortium. In January, 2007, our new Milwaukee County UW-Extension Director was contacted by a member of the Consortium to solicit UW-Extension's continued support and copyrights to the new HOCEP curriculum. A Memorandum of Understanding had never been formed between this group and UW-Extension and consequently, copyright questions regarding ownership of the new HOCEP curriculum were raised. Key administrative leaders in UW-Extension, including: the Associate Dean, Family Living Program Leader, Housing Specialist and the Milwaukee County Office Director, met to discuss UW-Extension's continued involvement with the Consortium and curriculum copyrights. The decision was reached to no longer be associated with this group, to discontinue the HOCEP and to release the un-copyrighted curriculum to the group. The group was notified of this decision and the HOCEP curriculum was distributed to each member in April, 2007. The last HOCEP was held in Milwaukee in June, 2007 and the Consortium disbanded after UW-Extension's withdrawal.

The HOCEP curriculum provided knowledge, resources, and skill development to participants, who used what they learned to assist low-income individuals and families to establish a foundation for financial stability, through an informed decision-making and preparation process for home-buying. This unique program filled a niche no other Wisconsin agency does at this time. My role in this program has helped me understand the importance of relationship-building, developing shared leadership in community initiatives and the importance of UW-Extension's role in filling educational gaps to address community issues.

Even though I no longer provide the HOCEP to home ownership counselors and educators, my commitment to housing issues in Milwaukee County continues through the work of the Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator, a bi-county role which I helped develop and secure funding.

### **Poverty and Food Insecurity Team and Poverty Education Programming**

Another program that I became involved with early in my role as a faculty member was through membership on UW-Extension's statewide Poverty and Food Insecurity (PFI) Team. This programming is based upon the basic, but very complex issue, from which so many of Milwaukee County's challenges take root: poverty. Ruby Payne's "Bridges out of Poverty" curriculum, supported by the PFI team, served as the basis for my initial poverty education programs in Milwaukee County. During my Bridges work, I received participant feedback, particularly from people of color, which indicated skepticism and non-acceptance of some of Payne's concepts. Payne contends there are three economic classes in our country: the wealthy, the middle-class and the poor. She proposes that poverty is a culture, and that cultural practices can be generalized to those in any one of the economic classes, regardless of race. She also suggests that each economic class has 'hidden rules' by which they operate. Those wishing to move up one class level, must have the necessary resources and be savvy in the 'hidden rules', or they will be perceived as interlopers, or class frauds, making it impossible to make the transition. Eventually, the lack of research base for these concepts stirred a great deal of controversy within the PFI team, causing the team to re-evaluate the use of Payne's work. Our team was informed of the challenges to Payne's work by a new PFI team member, Julie Keown-Bomar, Eau Claire County Family Living Educator. Bridges steering committee chair, Pence Revington, Home Visitation and Child Development Specialist, Keown-Bomar and I reviewed journal articles and scholarly critiques of Payne's work and then distributed these documents to other UW-Extension certified Bridges facilitators and PFI team members for feedback. Revington and I developed and distributed a survey, reviewed by Keown-Bomar and Nancy Coffey, Nutrition Education Coordinator – Eau Claire County, to team members to determine their readiness to adopt a new curriculum (*Exhibit 8*). Our team debated the Bridges' curriculum effectiveness, its research base, lack of peer review, and its key concepts. After much team dialogue and evaluation, the decision was made to abandon the Bridges curriculum that we had embraced for six years. With this decision came the daunting task of choosing a new poverty education curriculum. A team grant, co-authored by me and Revington (*Exhibit 9*) was funded by the UW-Extension Family Living Program to support curriculum development.

As co-chair of the PFI team, and a member of the poverty curriculum workgroup, I became very active in the search for a new poverty education curriculum which could meet the diverse needs of our counties. After months of curriculum review, our workgroup came to the conclusion that we would need to develop our own curriculum. Workgroup members; Coffey, Keown-Bomar, project manager Revington, and I set out to create a curriculum that met the following criteria: 1. to address the complex issues of poverty (including social class, privilege, racism, power, privilege, urban vs. rural) 2. to address a continuum of learner levels (raising awareness through transformational education) and resources in the curriculum and 3. to be non-prescriptive in our approach. We believe that Poverty Awareness for Community Engagement (PACE) meets that criterion. Piloted with UW-Extension educators in May, 2007, (*Exhibit 10*) initial feedback from participants was positive. However, a follow-up electronic survey of PACE workshop participants, developed by Revington and myself, and reviewed by Coffey and Keown-Bomar, distributed six months after the pilot workshop (*Exhibit 11*) revealed that participants weren't really using the curriculum. UW-Extension educators weren't comfortable searching through the PACE binder to develop a workshop specific to their needs. Through this survey, and informal feedback from the PFI team members, it became apparent that we had developed a toolkit of resources, rather than an actual curriculum.

A new, smaller PACE workgroup, consisting of program managers Revington and Nicholas Heckman, UW-Extension Poverty and Food Insecurity Program Specialist, and I, have refined and reorganized the resources into a true curriculum. PACE, a web-based resource, was posted on the UW-Extension website in summer 2009 for UW-Extension educators to download and use in their communities. In order to keep the curriculum current, we will be updating the statistics and adding new pieces, based on educators'

feedback and new research. PACE has been designed to welcome the scholarly contributions of UW-Extension educators. All contributions have been, and will continue to be, peer reviewed prior to being added to the curriculum. Our intention is for this curriculum to be a continually evolving work; a living curriculum. The curriculum includes seven sections: Introduction (preface, table of contents, how-to-use section), Teaching Essentials (poverty fact sheets), Companion Activities (activities which encourage personal reflection and explore social class, racism, and privilege), Faces of Poverty (videos, case studies, and poverty simulations), Ongoing Groups (Community Change Circles, Just Neighbors Toolkit, and book clubs), Inspiring Measurable Change (evaluation components), Keeping Up the PACE (resources for community engagement). We've also incorporated some valuable UW-Extension resources, including county specific data found in Making Ends Meet and Hunger Close to Home, which can be downloaded from UW-Extension's website to share with county residents and government officials, regarding local poverty concerns. It is a progressive curriculum, to be used with those who are unaware of poverty in their community, as well as those who are ready to take action to affect positive changes. As one of PACE's lead authors, my roles have included: assisting with curriculum organization, structure and formatting, research, writing and editing various curriculum documents, problem-solving and decision-making as a team member, and enlisting curriculum reviewers (*Exhibits 12 - 18*). We have included various methods of evaluation, reviewed by Taylor-Powell, so that we can measure the value of PACE (*Exhibit 19*) for those for whom it was intended. PACE was developed through research and integration of research-based concepts. This process has been an excellent learning experience regarding scholarship and how I apply it: the importance of creative, intellectual work to engage and potentially transform learners, the need for peer review to refine and improve the curriculum, and communicating the work through various methods (pilot training session, county programs, PFI team plan of work outcome indicators, PFI professional development workshops, online access, etc.) to add to our intellectual history.

Full-day PACE workshops were held in Milwaukee County in May (*Exhibit 20*) and November, 2008 and in June, 2009. Workshop evaluations and a follow-up evaluation survey of the May program (*Exhibit 21*) indicate participants found the workshop relevant to their work and took the commitment for a Call to Action seriously. Through the PFI team, Nick Heckman and I have presented three PACE professional development workshops for UW-Extension district meetings in 2009. We also presented PACE to UW Cooperative Extension's Administrative Committee and the Quad Counties Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program staff in August, 2009. We also hope to present PACE at state and nationwide conferences.

Another component of PACE which I have adopted in Milwaukee County is Community Change Circles (CCC). CCC are grass roots initiatives that rely on community residents, their ideas, leadership and strategies to address poverty in their own neighborhoods and community. In May, 2008, my colleague, Kimberly Porter, Family Support Professional Development Coordinator and I piloted the dialogue and action planning sessions. My roles were to recruit Circle participants, conduct a survey for their availability, schedule the meetings and co-facilitate the sessions. The eighteen-member Circle met for twelve hours, engaged in the Thriving Communities: Moving from Poverty to Prosperity curriculum developed by Everyday Democracy. Two action teams emerged from that pilot Circle. The Milwaukee Promise Concept Team has developed a 'white paper' which explores the potential for free state college/university tuition for Milwaukee Public High School graduates. The Employment Data Base Team has created an employment-based clearinghouse data base for job seekers. Both of these action teams identified team leaders, delegated responsibilities, and committed one year to accomplish their tasks. As a member of each team, my roles varied, but included: research, writing, editing, scheduling and facilitating meetings, developing a survey, recruiting volunteers and evaluation (*Exhibit 22 - 23*). Through this pilot experience, I realized that my action team roles were too broad and that leadership training would benefit team members and team development. It is my intention to share this work through the UW-Extension PFI team; to involve other UW-Extension educators in CCC in their own communities and provide a forum to exchange challenges, successes and effective strategies regarding this program. In April 2009, I co-facilitated a two-day Community Change Circles Facilitator training workshop in Madison for UW-Extension/UW-Colleges

educators, with Ja'Tawn Campbell-Pinson, UW-Extension Multicultural Awareness Trainer. We will also conduct a two hour Community Change Circles workshop at the UW-Extension Family Portraits: Diverse Families in Changing Communities Conference in November, 2009 in Stevens Point.

### **Building Community Connections Team**

Within my work related to building capacity around issues of poverty and food insecurity, I've incorporated what I've learned from my involvement with the UW-Extension state team Building Community Connections with Families (BCCF). The team is nearing completion of a set of materials intended to provide guidance to Family Living Educators on effective practice in supporting community initiatives that engage families and build family friendly communities. Engaging and connecting families to each other and to community organizations and initiatives not only helps families feel welcome and heard and receive greater support, but their participation builds stronger communities by contributing to more family friendly and responsive programs, organizations and policies and thereby to stronger communities.

In developing the "Connecting Families - Strengthening Communities" Guidebook, we used a combined approach entailing reflection on practice, both successful and unsuccessful, and then integrating practice reflections with existing literature. I helped edit chapters written by BCCF team members, lead team Wisconsin discussions of the document and gathered examples of practice from team members to support the principles of the document's text. Guidebriefs have been developed to synthesize the main concepts of family-centered community initiative building, outlined in the Guidebook. As lead author of the Guidebriefs, I have solicited team feedback and peer review of the documents. Challenges regarding the scholarly nature of the Guidebook and Guidebriefs were raised. The team has discussed these critiques and is addressing them through the integration of more research into the materials. The Guidebriefs are in the final stages of development and should be completed by the end of 2009.

The BCCF team presented a workshop at the Children, Youth, and Families at Risk conference in Chicago, May 2007, based on the Guidebriefs. As co-presenter of the workshop, I developed the power point presentation ([Exhibit 24](#)) and the workshop evaluation. The team has also provided professional development workshops regarding the Guidebriefs for the UW-Extension Eastern and Western districts. As well as co-facilitating the Eastern district workshop, I developed a hand-out, comparing two real community initiatives ([Exhibit 25](#)), a matching activity ([Exhibit 26](#)) and the workshop evaluation ([Exhibit 27](#)).

The Guidebriefs have been helpful to the Milwaukee Food and Fitness Initiative (MFFI), a coalition of food, fitness, health, academic and community organizations. The MFFI was formed in 2006, to integrate the systems and services available in Milwaukee to address food access, nutrition, physical activity and health, for improvement of nutrition and fitness of Milwaukee's urban children and their families. Our attempts to integrate the Guidebrief concepts in our project have been somewhat circuitous. Even though we initially came together to apply for a Kellogg Foundation grant, we have since sought to 1. define our purpose, 2. to recruit appropriate stakeholders, 3. to develop shared team leadership, 4. to purposefully plan and act, 5. to evaluate our progress and outcomes, and 6. to develop ownership and sustainability of our initiative. However, we have been challenged by our integration into another initiative, the Milwaukee County Nutrition and Physical Activity Coalition. We had to abort our purpose planning process, in order to focus on merging with the other coalition and then together, form a new purpose. However, we continue to focus on other components of the Guidebriefs. We are currently assessing our members' strengths and level of participation and we have been discussing strategies for engaging families in the next phases of the project (Stakeholders Guidebrief). The Initiative has identified and formed work groups to address important project issues (Shared Leadership and Plan & Act Guidebriefs). As a member of MFFI's Research and Evaluation team, we have identified and slightly modified assessment tools, and conducted neighborhood assessments in three targeted ethnic (Hispanic, Hmong, and African-American) communities (Purpose and Plan & Act Guidebriefs). Almost 250 residents participated in the various assessments, including: focus groups, in-home interviews and qualitative exercises. An Environmental Scan was conducted in each of the three neighborhoods, to determine safety issues, access to fresh fruits

and vegetables, prevalence of alcohol and tobacco advertising, and community resources. Assessment data revealed nutritional gaps in all three neighborhoods and the need for increased physical activity (*Exhibit 28*). Participants admitted health concerns related to poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles, as well as an interest in making healthy changes. The collected data has helped us to identify a coaching-centered program model for a nutrition and fitness education and intervention project in these neighborhoods. We have succeeded in obtaining funding, attracting committed stakeholders and meeting our deadlines. We have also been effective in recruiting and engaging families in our neighborhood assessments. We hope to maintain this level of family involvement throughout the project's implementation phases. My involvement with the development of the BCCF teams' Guidebook and Guidebriefs has helped me apply what I've learned to help create a family-centered community initiative in Milwaukee County.

### **Administrative Leadership**

Another important role for me is that of Program Coordinator of the Milwaukee County UW-Extension Family Living team. Program Coordinators, representatives from Family Living, Youth Development, Community Resources Development, Water Quality, Urban Agriculture/Horticulture, and Nutrition Education, provide staff leadership roles in our office. I am responsible for gathering and disseminating information to my respective team members, acting as a liaison between office administrators and my team, collecting data for and writing various reports, generating funding and revenue, holding team members accountable, and providing team support, guidance and feedback (including annual performance reviews). The Milwaukee County UW-Extension Family Living program area team consists of two educators, two part-time administrative assistants, two volunteers, and me (*Exhibit 29*). The team is highly motivated, talented and passionate about their work. As the Program Coordinator and faculty member, I look for opportunities to support the work of my team members. For example, the Family Support Professional Development Coordinator had shown interest in becoming a trainer for the Effective Black Parenting Program (EBBP), a culturally sensitive evidence-based parenting curriculum for African American parents. I forged a partnership with the Director of the Center for Improvement of Child Care that provided a training internship for my staff member and now allows her to train EBBP instructors, at a reduced rate. We are the only Extension office in the nation to offer this Instructor Training Program for EBBP. In another instance, the Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator was concerned she was unable to attend a foreclosure symposium sponsored by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago (FRBC) in Illinois. I encouraged her to invite them to conduct a similar event in Wisconsin. As a result, she has partnered with the FRBC and WHEDA to sponsor three sequential statewide foreclosure events in 2007 and 2008. One outcome of these events has been the formation of statewide work groups to address critical foreclosure issues, including: financial products options, litigation resources, education, and community stabilization.

I have assisted team members with issues of funding, budget development, report writing, Logic model development, conflict resolution, evaluation, conveying the value of their work, professional development, and career evolution. Sometimes all they need is a good listener, to work out their own thought processes. Other times, we brainstorm and problem solve. I also acknowledge them for the wonderful work they do in our county and beyond. In 2008, Revington and I nominated Kimberly Porter for the UW Wisconsin's Women of Color Award. Over a half dozen Family Living administrators and colleagues were present as Kimberly accepted her award at a luncheon ceremony in Green Bay in April, 2008.

Among my leadership responsibilities, I'm required to secure funding for staff positions and to generate office revenue. These resource management duties add a dimension to my role that is quite demanding. It is essential to the survival of our office that Family Living generates an average of \$30,000 annually, to contribute to our collective \$120,000 revenue requirement. Our office has also had to fight for our existence during annual county budget cuts. During the stressful and morale-diminishing 'survival mode' we endure each autumn, we also maintain our commitment to our mission to 'connect people to university knowledge they can use'. We've learned to be proactive in our fight for survival through our "We Support Milwaukee County UW-Extension" post card campaign and by enlisting participant and partner support to contact the County Board of Supervisors and members of the pivotal Finance Committee. I've met with

the Chair of the County Health & Human Services Committee, in 2009, to inform her of our Family Living outreach efforts and then I made a formal presentation to the whole committee to convey the value of our work. I developed a Milwaukee County Family Living programs marketing document for county board supervisors, partners, legislators, and residents to generate interest in and support for our programs (*Exhibit 30*). In order to be more effective in the area of revenue generation, I would like to learn more about marketing and how to recruit and enlist program sponsors.

I've written grants which have allowed me to hire qualified staff members to address the needs of our community. These positions include: the Family Support Professional Development Coordinator, who provides professional development training and consultative services for a home visitation consortium, the Financial Literacy Educator, who coordinated the Get Checking financial literacy program and the Milwaukee Saves, "Build Wealth, not Debt" campaign and as mentioned earlier, the Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator position, who focuses on predatory lending and foreclosure prevention education. However, I have also grieved the loss of the Financial Literacy Educator at the end of her position's funding cycle and then taken on the coordination of the Get Checking program after the demise of this position. Through my grant coaching and mentoring, the Family Support Professional Development Coordinator has now assumed the responsibility for developing proposals to fund her position. Through a contract with the City of Milwaukee, the Housing and Consumer Education Coordinator is now acting as the City's Foreclosure Initiative Program Manager. When the opportunity presented, I brought it to the attention of my County office Director and Assistant Director, and they negotiated a contract with the City to secure the services of Milwaukee County UW-Extension. This is the first such partnership between the City of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County UW-Extension. It will provide our office with a high profile in the community, which will certainly increase our value with legislators and provide much-needed assistance to the City and its residents threatened with foreclosure.

I've learned to evaluate funding streams by weighing the amount of the grant against the amount of work and 'hoop-jumping' required for a grant award. My successful grant awards have included amounts less than one-hundred dollars to over one hundred-thousand dollars. Writing grants is a key part of my administrative duties, for without this funding our office capacity would only meet a miniscule portion of the educational needs of Milwaukee County residents.

Another way I've learned to capitalize on available resources is to recruit and orient volunteers to assist with UW-Extension programs. I've been fortunate to enlist the assistance of two unpaid staff members: a PACE Book Club Facilitator and a Get Checking Volunteer Program Outreach Liaison. The book club facilitator has offered two 5-session book club discussions for Family Resource Centers in Milwaukee. Book club participants indicated the discussions gave them an increased awareness of, and an appreciation for, different perspectives regarding poverty. The purpose of the Get Checking Outreach Liaison role is to maintain and strengthen connections with the program's financial institutions; to meet with their front line staff, provide program updates, and encourage them to promote the program to potential customers. The new Outreach Liaison, hired in November, 2008, has attended partnership meetings, presented workshops at several financial institution staff meetings in 2009 and is assisting with the development of a new curriculum for the unbanked, which will replace Get Checking in 2010.

My evolution as a scholar has been somewhat challenging. Circumstances forced me to adopt both the Home Ownership Counseling Education Program and Get Checking programs, in order to sustain them. For years, our county office has had to mount a survival campaign, or fight budget cuts. We were forced into our second office move within the last six years. I have found that flexibility has been both strength and burden. By taking on programs that were originally coordinated by others, I've increased my breadth of programming and knowledge of new topics, but was not able to develop the depth needed to be a true resource and local expert in these areas. However, I feel I have found my scholarly niche in Milwaukee County: issues of poverty. All residents are affected by access, or lack of access to: resources, life-enriching opportunities and support systems. This is the focus for my work now and in the future.