

Summary of Professional Contributions and Scholarship

Professional and Programmatic Evolution... *I am passionate about helping people to positively impact the long-term health and sustainability of their community. When I started as Community Resource Development (CRD) Educator I was uncertain how to apply my passion and knowledge to the needs of Green County communities. Over the past four years I have learned to effectively link my educational and facilitative skills, as well as University resources, with individuals and groups to enhance their leadership and decision making around local issues.*

I exercise a consistent program development approach, seeking the counsel of local constituents and UW-Extension colleagues to determine appropriate programmatic responses, research models and resources, and create locally tailored educational products. My teaching approach blends various methods so each client's learning style is accommodated. I ground my lessons in a research base, designing locally relevant teachings that challenge learners to grow from their educational experience. My programming helps communities respond to issues through change processes. While facilitating these processes I teach skills for strengthening organizational effectiveness. I also use applied research as a teaching tool, helping communities better understand issues and possible solutions, transforming their ability to effectively address community issues.

Although community identified needs directed the development of my major programs, it took some time for me to formulate a larger framework within which to think about programming. About a year into the position I took a telecourse offered by Michigan State University¹ with the intent of learning about rural economic development. I completed the course with this knowledge as well as an understanding of eight indicators for determining increased community capacity: (1) expanding citizen participation, (2) expanding leadership base, (3) strengthened individual skills, (4) a widely shared vision, (5) a strategic community agenda, (6) consistent and tangible progress towards goals, (7) strengthened community organizations and institutions, and (8) improved resource utilization². These indicators have shaped my personal programming framework by serving as principles that guide my response to local needs³.

I. Leadership for a Stronger Community: My first day on the job, I was asked to assist with the design and implementation of a community leadership program. Community leadership was reinforced as a local need through multiple four-year program planning processes conducted by the UW-Extension Green County office and by a needs survey I conducted in my first month (exhibit 1). Because developing leaders takes time and this clear community need matched my educational background, I decided to develop my first major program around leadership for a stronger community.

A) Green County Leaders

I facilitated community partner discussions that resulted in defining the Green County Leaders (GCL) program mission and vision, identifying long-term objectives, and clarifying the target audience. From these discussions I developed a marketing brochure (exhibit 2). Next I began the task of developing a curriculum that would achieve the program's objectives. I found that a void exists within the leadership literature, and while there is a great deal of research on leadership, little

¹ The telecourse was entitled "Small Town and Rural Economic Development".

² Flora, C. B., and Luther, V. (2000). "An Introduction to Building Community Capacity." In P. V. Schaeffer and S. Loveridge, Eds., *Small Town and Rural Economic Development: A Case Studies Approach*, 1-3. Westport, CT: Praeger.

³ Throughout this summary of professional contributions and scholarship these indicators are italicized to demonstrate how they have been woven into my programming framework.

identifies community leadership program models that result in measurable local impacts. Recognizing this, I investigated successful community leadership programs in Wisconsin⁴ and consulted with Center for Community Economic Development specialists about best practices. This served as the foundation for deliberately designing the GCL curriculum. To ensure the program's sessions were focused on local issues I identified themes (i.e. agriculture, economic development) from the curriculum of existing community leadership programs, and then convened advisory groups of local stakeholders and experts around those themes (exhibit 3). The stakeholders were asked to identify issues within the theme areas that local leaders should know and/or be able to respond to. I worked with the curriculum committee to translate the stakeholder input and develop a core curriculum that is revised yearly based on session evaluations I administer (exhibit 4).

In addition to end of session evaluations, I conduct a comprehensive assessment of the program participants to determine if program objectives are being met (exhibit 5). The assessment shows participants believe the program has increased their awareness and understanding of issues facing Green County communities, their awareness of resources available to address local issues, and their network of local contacts. I have seen participants demonstrate this growth through their community projects. They select a community issue they are passionate about and work in teams applying knowledge and skills learned in GCL to develop a response to the need. I advise the project teams throughout the process providing them with a framework for planning and presenting their project (exhibit 6). Two projects stand out for me as excellent examples of the kind of leadership in community issues I want to see program participants demonstrate.

- 2003-2004 participants identified a need to enhance cooperation between local governments, and developed a Green County Local Government Forum that brought together 23 local officials to network and learn about a common topic (exhibit 7).
- 2004-2005 participants identified the need of the Green County Human Services Nutrition Program⁵ for volunteers to deliver meals to home-bound individuals, and sent a challenge letter to area businesses that, as of August 2005, resulted in a volunteer waiting list.

Not only do I coordinate each session and advise on the community projects, I teach most of the skill development lessons including conflict⁶, participatory decision making⁷ and using the temperament component of personality to enhance communication⁸. In the end of session evaluations participants reported that their *individual leadership skills were strengthened* (exhibit 8). This was re-affirmed in the comprehensive program assessment (exhibit 5). The level of increase in this area has not been as great as I had hoped, attributable in part to the high level of skills that program participants have prior to entering the program. I also attribute this to a disconnect between the skills we are teaching and participant's understanding of how the skills relate to community leadership. Therefore, at the end of each session we now have reflection on how what was learned is related to leadership in the community. Participants clearly feel more comfortable taking on leadership roles and are *expanding the leadership base* in the county as evidenced by GCL graduates who now serve on boards of the Monroe Main Street, Green County United Way and Habitat for Humanity, and are members of a citizen advisory committee on sidewalks in Brodhead and an ad hoc committee on large scale retail in Monroe.

⁴ Examples: Sauk County Institute of Leadership, Community Leadership Alliance, Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program

⁵ The Green County Human Services Nutrition Program is commonly referred to in other counties as Meals on Wheels.

⁶ Carpenter, S. L., and Kennedy, W. J. D. (2001). *Managing Public Disputes: A Practical Guide for Government, Business, and Citizen's Groups*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

⁷ Kaner, S., Lind, L., Toldi, C., Fisk, S., and Berger, D. (1996). *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Gabriola Island, BC Canada: New Society Publishers.

⁸ I received certification as a Matrixx Facilitator. This is one of many research-based tools that explores temperament (one facet of personality) and its relationship to communication.

It is exciting to see GCL graduates active in their organizations and communities. Alumni are applying knowledge gained during the program as demonstrated by a village president who reported, "I have used information that we gained during the tax and local leaders discussion to set our budget for the village for the year". Graduates of GCL tell me that the program was invaluable. The Director of Public Works in the City of Monroe stated, "The GCL classes have been the best series of classes I have attended in my 25 years with the City. I took something home from every class I was able to attend". It is rewarding to know that I helped Green County make *tangible progress towards achieving the goal* of a successful community leadership program⁹ that is fostering strong and active leaders. The county development corporation director stated in an evaluation of my contributions and impact that, "This program, now entering its 4th year, would not have begun without Sarah's input. She provided the structure needed to organize the elements of the program. We knew what we wanted to accomplish, but for several years we struggled with implementation" (exhibit 9).

I have shared the successes and failures of GCL with colleagues across the state. And, I have assisted colleagues with starting community leadership programs in their counties, including providing samples of evaluation tools to Richland County, a model for using Desire-2-Learn (D2L)¹⁰ to Waushara County, and curriculum samples to Calumet County. In early 2006 I will be speaking to the Walworth County Community Partner Advisory Group about community leadership programs¹¹. Additionally, I have presented on the topics of on-line leadership resources, and strategies for successful participant recruitment at the 2005 Wisconsin Leadership Coordinator's Conference. I also presented at the 2nd Annual Wisconsin Community Leadership Summit sharing a lesson on leadership styles¹² that demonstrates how to effectively blend teaching methods to meet multiple learner needs (exhibit 10).

Colleagues recognized my expertise in community leadership programming by requesting my assistance in forming a Community, Natural Resources and Economic Development (CNRED) program area team, focused on community leadership development. I co-lead this team with the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program and was one of three team members that secured funding for the team's two major initiatives: the 2005 Wisconsin Leadership Coordinator's Conference and a web-based repository of leadership development resources (exhibit 11). According to one CNRED team member, "We (the team) have clear goals to meet, and action plans to carry out the goals. The team is doing innovative things. Much of the credit for all this should go to Sarah."

II. Community Development in a Changing Environment: Prior to my employment, CRD educators in southwest Wisconsin held a number of educational sessions on the topic of Wisconsin's 1999 comprehensive planning law, prompting the county zoning committee to contact me to assist with further education. After discussions with key individuals it was clear the issue underlying comprehensive planning was the need for communities to understand and respond effectively to change. As a result, I built my second major program around community development in a changing environment.

⁹ GCL has graduated 51 participants over three years.

¹⁰ Desire-2-Learn (D2L) is the UW-Extension program for online courses.

¹¹ I presented on GCL at a District WACEC meeting that Walworth County attended and they became so interested in the program that they have invited me to speak about it even though they do not currently have a CRD educator.

¹² The lesson introduces James McGregor Burns' theory of transactional and transformational leadership. Burns is credited with changing the way in which leadership is viewed, and initiating modern day research into leadership.

A) Comprehensive Planning

I was able to identify multiple educational roles in comprehensive planning. Initially I assisted communities and local governments with understanding the implications of the comprehensive planning law for their community, their options for responding, and a proposed countywide planning process involving joint application for a planning grant (exhibit 12). This education was instrumental in getting the county and 20 (of 22) towns, cities and villages to agree to jointly apply for a State comprehensive planning grant which they were awarded in 2003. At this point I shifted my education to organizing communities for participation in the countywide planning process.

The Wisconsin comprehensive planning law requires plan commissions to recommend the plan to the local governing body for adoption. In order to form a plan commission, towns must adopt village powers. The education I provided assisted the only town without village powers in adopting them at their Annual Meeting, and assisted fourteen towns previously without plan commissions with adopting an ordinance to form them. Because plan commissions were new for these towns I coordinated a training for plan commissioners using local and UW-Extension resources and speakers¹³ (exhibit 13). This training *strengthened individual's skills*, preparing them to serve on local plan commissions and participate in the planning process (exhibit 14).

- Forty-eight (94% of 56 participants responding to an evaluation) plan commission training attendees said they were more prepared to serve on their local plan commission.
- An analysis of 16 local plan commissions revealed that 65% of individuals from those jurisdictions that attended the plan commission training ended up serving on their local plan commission.
- According to one planning process participant, "The plan commission members are more knowledgeable as a result of Sarah's educational efforts and as a result their decision making is more informed".

Following the formation of plan commissions I worked with the Southwest Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission on a public participation workshop where plan commissioners learned about public participation principles, methods, and requirements in the comprehensive planning process (exhibit 15). My educational efforts have *expanded citizen participation* in the comprehensive planning process.

- All 21 jurisdictions participating in the planning process wrote public participation plans that applied concepts taught in the public participation workshop, including involvement of the public in multiple methods throughout the planning process.
- 3,926 property owners completed a public opinion survey
- 270 people attended a total of eight visioning sessions
- Four of eight town plan commissions, that attended a workshop I hosted on open houses, used workshop resources in open houses they held to inform citizens about their plan.

¹³ These trainings for plan commissioners cross over into my program on Leadership for a Stronger Community, as they gave these position-based leaders skills necessary for effectively leading the comprehensive planning process in their communities.

Later in the planning process I took the lead on community visioning designed to guide further comprehensive plan development (exhibit 16). I adapted the visioning sessions from *Building Our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning*¹⁴, facilitated the sessions and followed them with an educational session to assist plan commissions with developing local vision statements. My educational efforts have resulted in the development of vision statements that are guiding planning decisions (exhibit 17).

- All 21 jurisdictions participating in the planning process developed vision statements following the facilitated visioning sessions.
- Plan commissions responding to a feedback survey indicated that the facilitation and resources I provided assisted them with developing their vision statement.
- Eleven plan commissions report referring to their vision statement when making decisions on the comprehensive plan. Plan commissions responded that their vision statement has assisted them while working on their community's comprehensive plan. One plan commission stated, "(the vision statement) has kept us focused on what we have, and has been and is a guiding tool that all of our decisions are based on", while another reported, "we try to make sure all of our decisions are compatible with our vision statement".

With my assistance, Green County has made *tangible progress towards achieving the goal of completing a countywide comprehensive planning process*. By the end of 2005 all participating jurisdictions excluding the county will have adopted their comprehensive plans. According to a key player in the planning process, "Sarah's contributions to the project have served to break down complex planning issues and procedures so that there is increased knowledge and less confusion among the participating plan commissions".

A number of educational materials I developed for comprehensive planning have been adapted by colleagues. The Richland County CRD educator adapted my plan commission training which was recognized as valuable by colleagues when they awarded me the Wisconsin Extension Environmental and Community Development Association's (WEECDA) award for Quality of Teaching in 2005. At least two colleagues have adapted several of my *Planning Focus* fact sheets (exhibit 18). One colleague was referred to the fact sheets by the project manager for the Green County comprehensive planning process. Additionally, I have contributed to my colleagues' increased knowledge related to comprehensive planning education by serving as part of the team that designed a professional in-service focused on the nine elements of comprehensive plans¹⁵. I co-facilitated an integrative learning exercise as part of the in-service.

B) Addressing Issues of Community Concern

Community needs are not always voiced through a request for UW-Extension educational assistance. I have learned the importance of helping communities understand how I can aid them in addressing issues of community concern. For example, in 2001 the county board of supervisors was grappling with whether or not to enact a county sales and use tax, but had not identified UW-Extension as a resource in this situation. I localized a fact sheet developed by the Lafayette County CRD educator explaining the tax, how it is implemented, who it affects, and the potential revenues the county would collect (exhibit 19). I worked with Local Government Center specialists to develop projections for sales and use tax collections in Green County. These projections accounted for a large local retailer's catalog sales that do not have county sales tax collected on them. I shared the

¹⁴ Green G., Haines, A., and Halebsky, S. (2000). *Building Our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning*. (Publication No. G3708). Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Extension.

¹⁵ 2002 CNRED Comprehensive Planning Elements In-service

fact sheet with the county finance director and committee who asked me to present on this topic at a county board meeting. Prior to my educational efforts the sales tax discussion had been tabled several times. Following the fact sheet and presentation the board was able to move forward in making an informed decision. In 2002 they adopted the half-percent county sales and use tax. Of the total \$1.2 million in revenue collected between January and November of 2003, \$600,000.00 was used to reduce the county's 2003 tax levy. Most of the remaining 2003 tax revenue was put towards increasing the county's undesignated portion of the general fund, which at \$0.00 in 2000 and 2001 was described by the county's financial advisors as being too low a percentage of the total general fund amount. In a December 11, 2003 article in *The Monroe Times*, the County Finance Director was quoted as saying, "If we didn't have the sales tax, the county would have been forced to make cuts".

In another instance, the City of Monroe was faced with an issue of community concern and did not initially recognize UW-Extension as being able to provide resources to assist them. Business owners in the downtown were concerned about the potential impact of a proposed parking fine increase, as well as a perceived lack of parking for customers. At a Department of Community Resource Development Symposium, a colleague presented on a parking study that I thought could be replicated in Monroe. Having already built credibility with the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) Board, I approached them with a presentation summarizing research on downtown parking. The BID and City agreed a study would provide policymakers with objective data to use in making decisions related to parking, formed a joint committee, and requested my assistance in developing, conducting and reporting on the study (exhibit 20). The study report provides UW-Extension colleagues with a third Wisconsin example of applying research to address local parking issues¹⁶. The City suspended decisions related to parking enforcement until the study was complete; and then, following the study, made a series of decisions consistent with the parking study recommendations (exhibit 21). In an evaluation of my contributions and the impact of the parking study a committee member wrote, "the final result has been referred to on several occasions at the City level and Main Street" (exhibit 22). Most recently the study report has been used as baseline information in the re-design proposals for downtown parking.

As a result of the credibility I had built with the parking study, and the social networks I was creating within the community, it was recognized that I could assist with the surprisingly controversial issue of application to the Wisconsin Main Street program. Wanting to minimize debate and work towards consensus, I designed and facilitated a community discussion using the alternative/consequences model of analyzing issues. I asked participants to first identify the core issues facing the downtown then identify alternatives to addressing these core issues, and consequences of each alternative (exhibit 23). Community forum participants identified and later implemented action plans to further explore the issue of applying for Main Street. Following a comprehensive report on the action plan findings a *strategic community agenda* was established which resulted in hiring a downtown coordinator and application to the Main Street Program, both of which were more widely supported than if the community discussion had not been held. In 2004 I was once again invited to facilitate a community discussion focused on the downtown and a vision for its future. I adapted the research-based visioning processes described in *Building Our Future: A Guide to Community Visioning* to focus uniquely on the four points of the Main Street approach (exhibit 24). Learning from the difficulties experienced with getting participation in the visioning sessions for comprehensive planning, I encouraged the downtown coordinator to personally invite participants. This approach resulted in good stakeholder representation at the visioning sessions and the development of a *widely shared vision* for the downtown. The visioning session also

¹⁶ The two Wisconsin parking studies previously conducted by UW-Extension were in Hudson and Hayward.

resulted in the Main Street¹⁷ Board setting a *strategic community agenda* for the downtown identifying priorities for the next several years (exhibit 25).

Contributions to Profession and University... *In sharing the work of my two major programs, I have assisted colleagues with developing their own local responses to community issues. However, I have made additional contributions to the profession and the University by actively exploring and demonstrating new and different ways to collaborate cross-county, cross-program area, within the county and within the CNRED program area. Examples of these collaborations include the Youth Leadership Curriculum, the 2002 Green County Family Impact Seminar, the 2004 Cheese Days Study, and a Local Government Programming Guide.*

A) Youth Leadership Curriculum

Recognizing the importance of developing leadership skills among youth, I collaborated with the Green County 4-H Youth Development (4-HYD) agent and the Iowa County 4-HYD and CRD agents to develop the *Youth Leadership Curriculum*. The uniqueness of the curriculum is in its intentional design to be used in its entirety as a youth leadership program, while at the same time providing educators (including K-12 teachers) with stand-alone lessons they can incorporate into their existing courses and programs. I contributed to the overall organization of the curriculum, the development of evaluation tools, and the content of several lessons (exhibit 26). We distributed the curriculum to 19 school districts in Green and Iowa counties and have shared it with UW-Extension colleagues at a number of statewide conferences, resulting in over 30 requests for copies. After reviewing the curriculum, the Associate 4-HYD Program Leader stated, "I'm very impressed with your collaborative work...In addition to being an impressive cross-program effort, the CD is an innovative approach to addressing an identified need".

B) Family Impact Seminar

In 2002 I collaborated with the Green County Family Living educator on a teaching for a local Family Impact Seminar on the topic "Scarce Government Resources: The Economic Impact on Families". Together we identified demographic and socio-economic trends relevant to Green County communities. Working with Local Government Center specialists I enhanced the teaching with data designed to express the current fiscal climate for local governments in Green County¹⁸. From these trends and the fiscal climate data we drew conclusions about the implications to families and policies that impact families, setting the stage for the seminar keynote speakers and the roundtable discussions. We shared the presentation at the 2003 Family Living Statewide Conference as an example of effective cross-program area collaboration (exhibit 27).

C) Cheese Days Festival Study

In response to a local festival committee's need to communicate the value of the festival and identify ways to increase its impact on the Green County community, I collaborated across county lines with the Lafayette County CRD educator on a 2004 study of the Green County Cheese Days Festival. I designed the survey, coordinated data collection, and developed the study report (exhibit 28). The study has been shared with the Green County Tourism Committee and the Green County Cheese Days Corporation Board who intends to use it to make changes to the 2006 festival and its marketing. The local radio station invited me to speak on the study, and the local newspaper printed a story, both of which helped to communicate the impact of the festival to the community. The study adds to a handful of similar studies that educators can use when thinking about how to address similar issues in their communities. A revised version has been submitted for publication in the Department of Community Resource Development. In addition, I have spoken with one

¹⁷ Monroe was designated as a Wisconsin Main Street community in 2005.

¹⁸ This is around the time when the State was re-examining the shared revenue formulas and proposing cuts.

colleague wanting to better understand how to apply input/output modeling to their local situation. The Ozaukee County CRD educator also inquired about modifying the study for a local festival after individuals in Cedarburg Festivals Inc. found the study on the Internet and showed interest in the value of such a study for their festivals.

D) Local Government Programming Guide

As a member of the CNRED Local Governance and Finance team I collaborated with two team members to develop a publication on approaches to local government programming (exhibit 29). That piece was shared through an all-CNRED email and is available on the Local Government Center website. It is being used in the team's program that orientates new colleagues to local government programming and resources. The guide has enriched the body of work available to colleagues interested in developing programming on local governance and finance.

What the Future Brings... Over the last four years I have seen significant growth in my programming response to local needs, my credibility and social networks within Green County, and my ability to add to the community development and Extension professions. My work has positioned me to be able to make additional and significant impacts through local programs.

Because increased skills and awareness do not automatically result in individuals taking on new leadership roles, the work I have done with GCL has the potential for expansion through the development of a system that effectively links program graduates to community leadership opportunities and positions. In addition, stakeholders in a strategic planning session articulated that GCL is not meeting all of the leadership development needs within the county. Here is another opportunity to develop programming in community leadership.

Recently, my leadership programming has included a focus on *strengthening community organizations and institutions*. I am currently working with the Green County Development Corporation (GCDC) facilitating a strategic planning process that will conclude in early 2006. After participating in a stakeholder session held as part of the GCDC strategic planning process, the county tourism director approached me stating that the session demonstrated to her the value of strategic planning. In recent months, we have begun a strategic process for Green County Tourism. Organizational development work continues to build with interest shown by the Monroe Public Library and the Green County Housing Partnership. This work will help these organizations more effectively address community needs which will enable me to have greater reach in positively impacting the long-term health and sustainability of Green County communities.

I have demonstrated the value of UW-Extension educational assistance through my previous successes working on community issues. As a result, I began working with Monroe facilitating an open and public process to study the issue of large scale retail. The City of Brodhead requested similar assistance in working with them to form and guide a citizen committee studying a contentious sidewalk issue. I intend to remain flexible in planning my programming time so I can continue to be responsive as new community issues arise.

My professional growth over the past four years is only the beginning. As my expertise and experience base grow, I will be able to make greater contributions to Green County, the profession, and Extension. Continued involvement on high performing, statewide teams, focused on increasing internal capacities and developing resources to respond to community issues; and, my dedication to collaborative work, modeling creative ways to address both local needs and the needs of Extension educators will aid me in these contributions. I believe my continued dedication to professional development and a sustained passion for creating positive impact in communities make me a successful community educator.