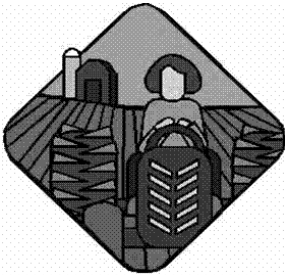


# Heart of the Farm Women in Agriculture



## Wisconsin's Heart of the Farm

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Heart of the Farm  
Dates and Locations:

- Thursday, November 15, 2007—Lancaster
- Friday, January 25, 2008—Monroe County
- Thursday, March 6, 2008—Eau Claire
- Friday, March 7, 2008—Oshkosh

*Heart of the Farm—Women in Agriculture (HOF)* began in 2002. Its mission is to provide farm management and production education to farm women to improve their business decision-making. *Heart of the Farm's* goal is to address the needs of farm women by providing education on farm management and production topics, connecting them with ag resources, and creating support networks. Heart of the Farm was supported financially from 2002—2007 through the North Central Region Risk Management Education Center.

This newsletter is an extension of the *Heart of the Farm's* mission and goal. The purpose

of the newsletter is to keep in touch with all of the HOF participants throughout the year and keep you updated on the various HOF conferences, workshops and activities happening throughout the state. Timely informational articles will also be included in each issue.

The 2006-07 winter HOF season included five one-day conferences. Host sites were Lyndon Station, Ladysmith, Oshkosh, Eau Claire and Wilton. Approximately 100 women participated in at least one conference in 2007.

Three *Annie's Projects* were held in 2006-07 as well. (For more information on *Annie's Project* see page 3.) In 2007, 32 women participated in this



Wilton HOF participants discuss balancing farm, work, family and personal priorities.

program at one of three sites — Tony, Burlington and Montello.

The planning has already started for the 2007-08 winter season.

Watch for updates and more details in the next issue and on our website: [www.uwex.edu/ces/heartofthefarm/](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/heartofthefarm/)

## Women equal partners in long-term decisions for the farm

Dr. David Kohl, Professor of Agricultural Finance at Virginia Tech, discussed the issues, challenges and actions for agri-lending in the future at the 2005 Wisconsin Agricultural Bankers' conference in Wisconsin Dells.

In his presentation he noted

the changes in the landscape of agriculture that will shape the way bankers do business with their farming clientele. One of the major changes that will take place is the role that women and minorities will play on the farm. Their roles will increase in the workforce, in

ownership and in the leadership of farming businesses. Dr. Kohl noted that one survey indicates female partners have influence on 63% of the investment choices on the farm.

(cont. on pg. 2—Equal Partners)

Items you might have on an agenda:

1. Review production reports (DHI records, daily milk production, vet reports, nutrition reports)
2. Identify upcoming events and expenditures
3. Review business goals and what actions are needed to see progress towards goals.
4. Set priorities and assign responsibilities
5. Schedule vacation and other time off.

## Effective Farm Business Meetings

You always say you need to have them, but the day to day tasks and the daily fires you put out seem to get in the way. Or maybe you have regular meetings, but they resemble the local coffee klatch and not a business discussion.

So how do you start having regular, *effective* farm business meetings with operators, key employees and advisors?

Here are a few pointers for effective farm business

meetings:

- Set ground rules for the meeting. Some examples include: only one person speaks at a time, make requests rather than demands, and stay focused on the task at hand.
- Make and distribute an agenda a few days before the meeting. This allows for preparation and more thoughtful discussion.
- Set a time limit for the

meeting. Employees may already feel they have more work than time, setting a time limit lets them know you are respectful of their responsibilities and time.

- Assign duties for a facilitator, and note-taker. A facilitator keeps the discussion on the agenda and enforces ground rules; the note-taker provides a

*(cont. on page 3)*

Because of their close connection to and understanding of the farm business finances, women's involvement in the decision-making for their farm operation is critical.

His comments and statistics support findings that the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension reported in the fall of 2003. Beginning in 2002, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension sponsored *Heart of the Farm – Women in Agriculture* conferences. Evaluations from the 2002 and 2003 conferences indicate women are involved in major farm decisions. Not surprising, the majority of the women are responsible for almost all of the decisions related to the household (93%), and are least involved with decisions about crop management. The women are most likely to be a part of the decision making in areas that relate to long-term planning and farm investments. And to a slightly lesser degree, they influence the decisions that relate to farm labor, livestock or dairy management.

Farm women were also asked

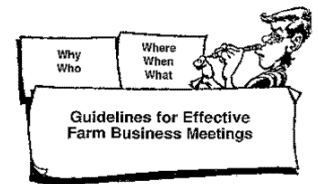
how they would describe their involvement in the decisions that were made on the farm. More than half (57%) said that they were "very involved." Another one-third (30%) said that they were "involved to somewhat involved." Only 2% said they were "not involved at all" in the farm decision – making.

Similar to their involvement in the farm decision-making, farm women play a crucial role in the farm tasks that they perform. 'Women's work' includes farm work, household tasks, and for some, off-farm work as well. The majority of the women (85%) indicated that they "regularly" or "sometimes" do the farm bookkeeping and bill paying. Because of their close connection to and understanding of the farm business finances, women's involvement in the decision-making for their farm operation is critical.

Farm women are eager to learn about farm and risk management strategies, new enterprises and new markets for their products. However, they have other responsibilities they must focus on in addition to the farm. Forty-one percent of *Heart of the Farm* participants indicated they worked off the farm and averaged 29 hours per week at their off –farm jobs.

Reaching these busy farm women with the same education and information provided to their male partners is a challenge for Extension educators. The participants in *Heart of the Farm* noted that the two most important factors that influence a farm woman's attendance to a program or workshop are: (1) relevance to their farming operation, (2) knowledge that other women would be in attendance.

## Effective Farm Business Meetings *(cont. from page 2)*



- written record of the discussions and actions that need to be taken. If you like, you can also assign a time-keeper so the facilitator can focus on ground rules and getting everyone's input into the discussion.
- Be patient and encourage everyone to share ideas. It takes time to build the trust levels that make effective team meetings.
  - Praise and encourage everyone's efforts.
  - Provide reports on overall production so everyone can see the big picture.
  - Create action items and assign who is responsible for the action and when it should be completed. Review these at the end of the meeting. Also provide them in written form to everyone after the meeting.
  - Providing food can help employees and staff feel appreciated and helps create a comfortable environment — just make sure it doesn't change the meeting into a social event.
  - Focus team meetings on people and business goals rather than tasks.

## Annie's Project—Risk Management Education

In addition to the one-day conferences, *Heart of the Farm – Women in Agriculture* also provides a more in-depth workshop series for farm women. It is called *Annie's Project*, and it provides farm women the opportunity to learn about risk management in a setting that is comfortable for them.

*Annie's Project* is based on the experiences of a farm wife who spent her lifetime learning how to be an involved business partner with her farm husband. Together they did great things, but it wasn't easy. Annie's project takes life experiences and share's it with farm women living and working in a complex dynamic, evolving business environment.

In the series, farm women receive training in the areas of financial records, production records, financial statements

and receive hands on training to complete their farm's balance sheet.

This program is designed to be a over a six to eight week period and the group meets between four and six times. The sessions are usually about three hours long, with a total contact time of 12 – 18 hours.

A typical agenda for a four-session Annie's Project would include:

- Discover the Color of your Personality
- Women & Money
- Household Budgeting
- Overview of financial record keeping
- Production record keeping for your enterprise
- Balance Sheets (Hands on activities!)
- Income Statements & Budgets

- Organizing your own farm's numbers into a balance sheet format
- Calculating performance data from your balance sheet

The last session is always the participants' choice of topics.

To learn more about Annie's Project and where the next session will be contact Joy Kirkpatrick at 608.263.3485 or [joy.kirkpatrick@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:joy.kirkpatrick@ces.uwex.edu)



**“Really loved both Annie's Project and HOF. It is nice to meet other farm women...who ironically only live a few miles from me. I have been able to use these relationships as a resource. (Farmers don't play cards on Saturday nights like they used to :o) ) Gaining the vital information to help our farm is awesome. The information I have learned has made us more successful. Hope to see more info in the future.”**

**—Julie Vanden Heuvel, Seymour, WI, HOF and Annie's Project participant**

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Bringing the resources of the University to the people of Wisconsin, where they live and work.

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### *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms*

Farming is one of the U.S.'s most hazardous occupations. Machinery, livestock, chemicals, and ponds all contribute to the danger—even more so for children. Children are curious and are attracted to machinery, livestock, bodies of water and supplies they see their parents or other adults working with on a daily basis. But children don't recognize the dangers and may forget the warnings they've been given about these hazards.

If off-farm childcare is not an option, then it is important to have a safe place for children to play on the farm. The

National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety, affiliated with the National Farm Medicine Center in Marshfield, has developed a guide for farm owners and others who want to understand features of safe play areas for children who live or visit farms. The focus of the publication is on children between two and 10 years old.

You cannot guarantee that any play area is absolutely injury or accident free. Children are unpredictable and cannot be relied upon to make the safest of decisions. Farm owners and parents are busy and may

expect because their children have "grown up around the farm" they should instinctively know the dangers in most situations. Agriculture and the farm environment are constantly changing. When you combine this with the uncertainty of children's behavior and parents' expectations, farms can be especially unsafe for children. The goal of *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms* is to provide information so farm families can preserve the best elements of living on and/or visiting



farm so that children can grow into healthy, happy adults with fond memories of their time on the farm.

The publication includes what a safe play area is, why some areas are not safe, elements of effective supervision, environmental factors and other issues that should be considered. It also includes a childhood growth and development chart and play area design worksheets.

To obtain a free copy of *Creating Safe Play Areas on Farms* call the National Children's Center at 800-662-6900.

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