

## Puentes Immersion Program

Nov. 24-Dec. 3, 2006

Report from: JoAnn Hinz

### **Purpose for my Participation**

I participated in this program with the following objectives in mind:

- Participating in this professional development opportunity would provide me with understanding and ideas that would inform future Mexico immersion activities for Cooperative Extension.
- I wanted to expand my Spanish language skills.
- I wanted to increase my knowledge of immigration issues that are relevant to the educational mission of Cooperative Extension.
- I wanted to spend time learning with Cooperative Extension colleagues.

### **Learning and General Observations**

- This was a professional development experience that expanded personal horizons, delivered valuable content, modeled experiential learning and built relationships with people and entities outside of Cooperative Extension. It also built collaborative relationships among colleagues. Cooperative Extension should consider all parts of this program for future Mexico immersion.
- The valuable benefit of this program was the mix of community residents with Extension professionals (two dairy farm owners, two managers of Mexican milkers and a public health nurse). I see this component as very important to an effective experience and one we should try to duplicate in the future.
- The language and home-stay components, offered by the Cemanahuac Educational Community in Buena Vista were excellent. Buena Vista is a wonderful community for home stays—small, rural, safe, easily navigated by walking, no distractions such as shopping or tourist attractions, good network of homestay families.
- We visited the communities and families of the WI and MN producers in the group. Although this required a great deal of travel time, it was worth the learning.
- Ways to strengthen the program: more strategic focus on issues relevant to the needs of Cooperative Extension, more of a systematic plan for the processing of learning. The Cemanahuac Educational Community offers a wide variety of resources that could be incorporated in the future. Advanced learning in preparation for the trip could be included.

### **Early Ideas for Future Programs**

- Develop a Cooperative Extension evaluation tool for future immersion programs.
- Work with Puentes to develop a future program in partnership with Cooperative Extension that would include two- or three-person teams of Wisconsin producers and community residences and Cooperative Extension professionals. The teams could determine the issues. Work with Cemanahuac to find resources.
- There is a potential for more learning about immigration issues.
- Discuss the value of the language component with participants. Offer programs with language components and programs without that option.
- Seek funding for partner expenses.

### **Personal Follow-up Plan**

- Build institutional relationship with Enrique Figueroa of UW-Milwaukee
- Explore working with DATCAP in immigration issues
- Work with Mary Lucas to develop website for immersion programs

- Contact Wis. Humanities Council (WHC) re: Farming and Rural Life grant program and work with colleagues on proposal for major grant for a future immigration project
- Take information from the experience to the Latino Task Force
- Bring participants of the Puentes program and participants of the Michigan State Extension program together to discuss plans for immersion experiences in the future.
- Report on these programs at the regional JCEP conference.