

Extension pools resources to help state prepare for January 1, 2000

By Pamela Seelman

No one can predict what will happen when Father Time leads us to the new millennium Jan. 1, 2000. But UW-Extension is helping alleviate anxiety by taking the lead in helping Wisconsin people, agencies and local governments plan and prepare for the new era.

"The efforts of faculty and staff across all the Extension divisions, to help people understand the issues and contend with potential problems caused by Y2K, exemplifies the best Wisconsin's system of extension education has to offer," said Cooperative Extension Dean **Carl O'Connor**.



Cooperative Extension has produced a dozen fact sheets on Y2K issues, distributed to the 72 county Extension offices. Topics range from farm issues to travel tips. The fact sheets about water and food safety were so popular that more copies were printed. Fact sheets can be found at the web site

www.uwex.edu/ces/admin/Y2K.

County Extension faculty have either led or joined coalitions with other agencies to develop local emergency management strategies and head off Y2K problems. In Milwaukee County, Carolyn Johnson is working with The Milwaukee Coalition for Y2K Preparedness to create a 72-

hour kit for any potential emergency. The coalition is working with local media to reach a variety of populations throughout the county.

CRD Agent Dan Hill has been working with the Lafayette County Y2K Task Force for a year. "Each incorporated municipality formed a Y2K work team at the local level. They have been working with UW-Extension to get the word out about addressing Y2K," said Hill. He conducted three workshops featuring an overview of Y2K

issues; what people can do to prepare themselves; and what's being done locally to prepare. "Local fire departments throughout Lafayette County, for example, checked their equipment to make sure it was Y2K compatible. They wrote manufacturers for verification and in some cases the equipment was compatible, in others, it was not."

Consumer issues were also a Y2K priority for Extension faculty and staff. Fact sheets on personal finance and fraud have been popular with consumers, and faculty and staff have joined with the Red Cross, emergency government, law enforcement and financial institutions to help avoid problems before they happen. Several fact sheets have been translated to reach Spanish and Hmong-speaking audiences.

In Lincoln County, Tom Cadwallader provided leadership for a county-wide Y2K emergency

management plan. The plan set a standard shared with other local governments around the state.

The Small Business Development Center network is reaching out to Wisconsin's business community with practical help as the Y2K clock continues to tick. The SBDCs are offering 13 half-day workshops on small business preparedness around the state this fall. The sessions focus on risk assessment, corrective actions and contingency planning in case all problems cannot be corrected. The sessions are being co-sponsored by the Small Business Administration and the Wisconsin Manufacturing Extension Partnership.

In western Wisconsin, Jan Gallagher of the UW-LaCrosse SBDC, has coordinated a community response to Y2K. While much of the effort has focused on business concerns, participants in Gallagher's sessions are also looking at issues affecting public health and safety.

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Seventeen 1999 Extension Award winners to be honored October 21

All Extension faculty and staff (including campus-based faculty/staff and spouses/guests) are invited to the 1999 Extension Awards Banquet to be held on Thursday, October 21, at the Lowell Center in Madison. UW-Extension annually honors faculty/staff and supporters of the extension function with awards in five categories. This year's award recipients, by category, are:

The *Award for Excellence*, for faculty and staff who have excelled in program development, teaching, or support of extension programs — **Larry Jones**, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program; **Byron Knight**, Wisconsin Public Television; **Neil Lerner**, Small Business Development Center, UW-Madison/Extension; **MS in Education off-campus degree program** (Marian Maciej-Hiner), UW-Platteville; and **Kalyani Rai**, Center for Urban Community Development, UW-Milwaukee/Extension.

The *Classified Staff Award for Exceptional Service*, to recognize outstanding performance in

supporting the extension mission — **Kathy Madigan**, UW-Extension Payroll & Staff Benefits; **Meg Wall-Wild**, Family Living Programs, UW-Madison/Extension; and **Jim Zuelsdorf**, UW-Extension Mail Services.

The *Friend of Extension Award*, for individuals or groups who have made outstanding contributions in support of the extension mission at the local, state or national levels — **Sally Bilder** for her service on the Wisconsin Public Radio Association Board of Directors; **Easter Seals of Wisconsin** for their partnership with UW-Extension and UW-Madison in the AgrAbility program, which provides education and assistance for farmers with disabilities; **Iria Riley** of Milwaukee, a community partner in programs of the Center for Urban Community Development, UW-Milwaukee/Extension; and the **Wisconsin Towns Association** for their support of Extension local government education programs.

The *Wisconsin Idea Award* this year goes to four Wisconsin paper

companies — **Consolidated Papers, Inc.**, **Wausau/Mosinee Papers**, **Weyerhaeuser Papers**, and **Georgia-Pacific** — for their partnership with UW-Stevens Point and UW-Extension in the Paper Science Academy, a certificate program for employees in the paper industry.

The *Extension Career Award*, honoring an outstanding faculty or staff member who has demonstrated long-term commitment, quality, leadership, and innovation in extension programming will be presented this year to **Dennis Gilbertson**, Instructional Communications Systems.

The October 21 banquet will begin with a social hour at 5:30 p.m. in the upper lounge at the Lowell Center, 610 Langdon Street, Madison. It will be followed by the dinner at 6:30 p.m. in the Lowell Center dining room. Advance reservations are necessary. Contact Maureen Sundell at (608) 262-5514 to register.

— *Sheila Mulcahy*

SBDC gives business Y2K help with software kits

A software kit that helps business owners do their own year 2000 computer compliance program is available from Extension's Small Business Development Center network. The "Conversion 2000: Y2K Jumpstart Kit" contains a software tool that helps managers get a quick start on their own Y2K compliance, plus a checklist, contingency plan outline, and a contingency planning template.

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Commerce and the Small Business Administration produced the kit. It is distributed through SBDC offices statewide and is available at no cost. A limited number of the kits are also available through the county Extension offices.

This Y2K self-help tool comes with a compact disk. The software can also be downloaded from a web site at <http://y2khelp.nist.gov> in both Access and Excel versions.

— *Joel Bradtke*

Pioneer donors support the Epsilon Sigma Phi board room in The Pyle Center

Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP), Cooperative Extension's fraternity, has reached the half-way point in its \$200,000 funding-raising campaign to name the Epsilon Sigma Phi Board Room in The Pyle Center. The funds will be used to keep The Pyle Center's technologies on the cutting edge into the next century. Contributors of \$5,000 or more will be permanently honored on the Recognition Wall in The Pyle Center's front entry, as well as in the ESP Board Room. Those who give \$1000 to \$4,999 will be recognized on plaques in the Board Room.

Pioneer donors who have given \$5,000 or more to date include Henry L. Ahlgren, Marvin & Ellouise Beatty, Albert & Shirley Beaver, Elwood Brickbauer, Lynndon Brooks, George Dehnert, Dennis & Ruth Domack, Ellen Fitzsimmons, Laverne B. Forest, Walter Gojmerac, Mary E. Mennes, Arthur E. Peterson, Rosemary Stare, Gale VandeBerg, Louise Young, and Viola Wilkinson.

Contributors of \$1000 or more are Jerold & Ruth Apps, Donald & Ruth Duxbury, Beverly Henderson,

Russ Luckow, Palmer McCoy, Mary Brintnall-Peterson, Maurice White, Leo Walsh, and Joe Tuss.

ESP's mission is to foster standards of excellence in the Cooperative Extension System (nationally and in Wisconsin), and to develop the Extension profession and professional — both current personnel and retirees. ESP fosters access to scholarships, loans and grants for Extension professionals, recognizes excel-

lence, offers professional development and leadership opportunities and a national platform for scholarly presentations, and connects personnel and retirees to build networks, continuity and support for Extension.

Anyone can join! Mary Brintnall-Peterson is the President of Wisconsin's ESP Chapter. Check out further details at <http://esp-nat.tamu.edu>



Family Living Programs Emeritus Professor Mary Mennes (left) jokes with Interim Chancellor Al Beaver and Cooperative Extension Associate Dean Ellen Fitzsimmons at the Epsilon Sigma Phi annual picnic in August. The picnic attracted 150 Cooperative Extension professionals and retirees from across the state.

Dual-Choice Enrollment Period Set for October 4-22

The Dual-Choice health insurance enrollment period for 2000 is scheduled for October 4 through October 22, 1999. Dual-Choice is for currently insured active employees and retirees who take part in the State Group Health Insurance program. Participants can change from one health plan to another or switch from single to family coverage without a waiting period for pre-existing medical conditions. Changes become effective January 1, 2000.

Even if you are satisfied with your current plan, you should review any changes to the plan's premium, benefits, and health care providers. Active employees wanting to switch plans or change coverage must submit a health application to Payroll and Staff

Benefits by 4:30 p.m. on October 22, 1999. If you want to remain with your current plan, you do NOT need to file a health application if your plan is still offered in 2000.

The Wisconsin Coalition of Annuity is sponsoring its annual teleconference on insurance plans for active and retired UW employees through the UW-Extension Educational Teleconference Network (ETN) from 9 to 10:20 a.m. on Thursday, October 14. Bill Kox, director of health benefits for Employee Trust Funds will speak and answer questions. Call Paula Keller, 608-283-5401 to register for the session.

In addition, eligible employees can enroll in the Employee Reimbursement Account (ERA) to set aside

money to pay medical and dependent care expenses with pre-tax dollars. The enrollment period is October 4 through November 5, 1999 for calendar year 2000. There will be no plan changes this year. The Interactive Voice Response system will NOT be used for the year 2000 enrollments. Paper enrollments will be re-instituted.

For further information on the Dual Choice health insurance or the Employee Reimbursement Account enrollment periods, contact UW-Extension Payroll and Staff Benefits at <http://www.uwex.edu/payroll/> or (608) 262-0531. No other insurance enrollments are scheduled for this fall.

—Brad Krause

"Adventures in Lifelong Learning," (ALL) an outreach program of UW-Parkside's Office of Continuing Education, has been awarded the third annual Wisconsin Humanities Council Governor's Humanities Award for Excellence in Public Humanities Programming. First Lady Sue Ann Thompson will present the award at a ceremony in Madison on October 8. ALL is a volunteer organization which plans humanities programming for senior adults, ages 50-89. With support from the UW-Parkside administration, ALL plans humanities lecture series and mini-courses, along with cultural field trips, to keep seniors from the Kenosha-Racine area active and engaged. The program experienced a 300% increase in membership its first year. Mark Marlaire, director of UW-Parkside's Continuing Education program, says, "The activity is significant because it brings together humanities-hungry audiences from Kenosha and Racine Counties. This success creates a model for further two-county activities."



"The 30-Second Candidate," a documentary that Wisconsin Public Television made for PBS, won a national News and Documentary Emmy Award from The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. "The 30-Second Candidate" was nominated for Outstanding Background Analysis of a Single Current Story. Co-producers Dave Iverson (left) and Kathy Bissen along with Mike Eicher, picked up the award in New York. The production explores the evolution of political advertising, its growth and the increasing influence of political consultants, and some possible options for reform. "The 30-Second Candidate" was part of the PBS Democracy Project, an initiative designed to stimulate citizen engagement in civic life. The production was funded by Public Television viewers and PBS.

for your use. Contact Vicki Pierce to arrange for a training session.

The UW-Extension exhibit is stored in the Extension Building, Madison. Call Rita Sears at (608) 262-3786 to reserve the exhibit.

Extension Display Available

UW-Extension now has a display exhibit available for anyone in the institution to use at conferences, trade shows and other events (for indoor use only).

The custom-designed display unit features the Extension logo, enlarged, on bright panels of white and gray. The backdrop is 98" wide by 98" high (with lights installed), on a slightly concave, modular pop-up metal frame. A custom conversion kit provides a small, freestanding counter top.

The exhibit, with the exception of signage or photos you may add, fits in two sturdy carrying cases

with wheels. The loaded cases weigh about 50 pounds each, and each measures about 14" x 14" x 39-1/2" high.

The exhibit can be customized by adding text or illustrations to the backdrop. Extension maintains a small library of display photos representative of institutional/program functions. These are available for you to borrow and use with the exhibit. To preview the photos, contact Vicki Pierce (608) 263-1100, vpierce@facstaff.wisc.edu. Set-up normally takes two people about one hour. You will need to be trained in setup before you can schedule the exhibit



SBDC staffer mentors W-2 'work experience' clients

Madison had the lowest unemployment rate in the nation last month. While a sustained, strong economy takes much of the credit for a high rate of employment, it is people like Christie Legler who play a key role in shaving another tenth of a percent off the unemployment rate.

Legler is a program assistant and office manager for the Extension Small Business Development Center (SBDC). She handles a stream of work that involves coordination with 12 SBDC field offices around the state. But she also supervises adults who are entering or re-entering the work force under the W-2 "Wisconsin Works" employment program.

"It's kind of like, each of us should give something back, and this is my way of participating," said Legler.

The SBDC has been an integral partner in the W-2 program through the work of State Director Erica Kauten. It has encouraged small-business owners to help people make transitions to the work place. And, through Legler's work, it

serves as a model for what it advocates.

Legler said that the SBDC is one of a number of sites for the "Work Experience Program" that W-2 clients of the Dane County Job Center use. She works with Roxanne Kolasch, a vocational/ disability assessment specialist at the Job Center, who refers people to the SBDC for a work experience assignment.

Four clients have completed their SBDC work experience with Legler. They're usually scheduled to work less than full-time, for up to two weeks. At this writing, Legler is scheduled to work with her fifth person in less than a year.

"All they know is that it's a requirement when they show up. They may be scared or angry, and they don't know what to expect," said Legler. "We give them a supportive environment. It helps them feel they haven't lost touch with reality.

"When people are in this program, many of their decisions are made

for them. I try to give them some control by asking them what hours they wish to work, when their break will be, what kind of work they're interested in."

The men and women who have had work experience at the SBDC do tasks such as copying, assembling mailings, and organizing projects.

Said Legler, "They're just like everybody else. Some of them have more issues to deal with than others. Many of them do not have a support network at home. It makes you look at life and be grateful . . . people with skills have already found jobs, but some of our work experience people have pretty unique skill sets. You have to bring them in, one by one."

At least one of the SBDC "graduates" is already in a permanent job, and has even referred her employer to the SBDC for assistance through business counseling. Said Legler, "This client wrote me a note that brought tears to my eyes - 'Thanks for everything. You've done more good for me than I could tell you'."



Christie Legler

Legler's gregarious, caring personality makes her an outstanding fit for the program. Said Kauten, "Christie facilitates a transition to work that is filled with self-confidence, self-sufficiency and success. She is providing an exceptional service."

Legler and her husband Dennis Legler are Sun Prairie residents. With two children at home, she juggles her career and family responsibilities but finds time to do sailing, gardening and to cheer for the Green Bay Packers. Near her telephone at work, she has a small sign that says, "Make it a habit to do nice things for people who will never find out."

— Joel Bradtke

Extension Program links kids with big buddies

An Extension 4-H youth development program that matches younger students with high school-aged peer mentors has been recognized by the State Council of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and will receive the council's Wisconsin Exemplary Prevention Award.

In "Big Buddies," high school students work with younger children in after-school community service, academic and social activities. The younger children get some special attention that helps many of them improve their grades and become more socially confident. The older students gain a sense of making a needed contribution to their communities.

Olivia Marshall, a Wisconsin Dells high school graduate who coordi-

nated the program for her community last year, said the mentoring program was valuable for both the older and younger students.

"I learned that I'm capable of doing something that would be valuable to the community. And, for the little buddies, they say they like having a friend - someone who cares about them and listens to them."

Marshall, who is studying international business, marketing and Spanish at Marquette University this fall, wrote the grant to the CESA district that funded the program last year and will fund it again next year. She has trained two other Dells high school students to take over as program coordinators this year.



The Big Buddies program provides younger kids with an older role model, mentor and friend

In Oconto Falls, project coordinator Lisa Divine-Barribeau said the project, now in its fourth year, has resulted in a stronger sense of belonging, higher grades and better school attendance for both the high school and the elementary school buddies. "The older students also sign a contract agreeing to be role models and not to drink alcohol, or use tobacco or drugs," Barribeau added.

Because of this no-use contract, 63 percent of mentors reported their use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs decreased or ended completely. The other 37 percent said their use didn't change because they did not use before getting involved in the program.

Every parent of a Little Buddy said the program helped his or her child with social skills, improved his or her sense of belonging and strengthened the bond to family, school and community. Eighty percent said the program helped their children get more out of school.

The vast majority of Big Buddies said the program helped them be positive role models and to feel more helpful to another person. And they said it made them feel more connected to family, school and community.

Big Buddy mentoring programs were established at Hillsboro, Gibraltar, Oconto Falls and Wisconsin Dells, where UW-Extension Teen Assessment Project surveys identified alcohol, tobacco and other drug use as the most important issues affecting youth. The program was designed to meet social, emotional and moral developmental needs of both high school and elementary students. Mentors were trained in communications and listening, leadership, alcohol and other drug refusal skills, conflict resolution, trust building, first aid and confidentiality guidelines. They can earn school credit for their involvement.

—Mary Ellen Bell

Using TV for horticulture education

Sharon Morrissey (right), Milwaukee County home horticulture agent, worked on a summer series on FOX Channel 6 in Milwaukee called "Gus' Green Thumb Gardens." The program consisted of three live cut-ins to the Wake-Up News every Monday morning through September. Together, TV 6 personality Gus Gnorski (left) and Morrissey visited a different garden each week. As the horticulture specialist for the segments, Morrissey offered advice on gardening topics, featuring several community gardens throughout Milwaukee and Waukesha, and showcasing UW-Extension's many partnerships in the area.



Cooperative Extension Presents Web Team Awards

Five web sites and their creators were honored for their innovation and effectiveness during a two-day Cooperative Extension Technology Summit held in September.

Two awards were given for educational impact. They went to Michael Rankin, Fond du Lac County Extension Agronomy, <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/> and

David Hinds, Local Government Center <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/>.

Two other awards were made for exemplary or innovative and early use of Web technology. They went to Mary Brintnall-Peterson and Joy First, Family Living, "Grandparents Raising Grandchildren", <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/gprg/gprg.html> and to Ellen Henert and Linda

Johnson, Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program, <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/>.

A "Web Friend of Cooperative Extension" award was also presented to a non-UW-Extension web site for performing a valuable function for the staff of Extension while demonstrating excellence in

design and utility. It went to Dan Patrinos, online content editor, *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* <http://www.jsonline.com>.

Extension employees were awarded certificates and electronic "seals" of distinction to add to their web sites. They were also presented with \$200 credit in professional development funds.

— Joel Bradtke

Engineering offers Masters at a Distance

The Master of Engineering in Professional Practice (MEPP) program began this summer, marking the first time UW Madison/Extension Department of Engineering Professional Development has offered a complete graduate degree via the World Wide Web. The Internet-based program has attracted 24 practicing engineers from all disciplines from across the U.S. Their experience in their respective fields ranges from four to 30 years.

According to program director Wayne Pferdehirt, the program targets engineers already in practice who wish to advance their current careers or who simply want to learn new skills to heighten job performance. "MEPP addresses the needs of engineers with such

responsibilities as project and program management, team leadership, and management of engineering services," says Pferdehirt. "It also aims to develop the personal, technical, and organizational skills of participants." Students can take the course from wherever they are - at home, at work, or in a hotel room while travelling. Students can complete nearly all the work on their own schedule.

One student, a project engineer at AKLAR in Madison cited the program's Internet delivery and the freedom to work at his own pace and schedule as the major advantages. Another student who works for CAP-GEMINI in Houston, TX appreciates the program's flexibility as he travels on the job fre-



Wayne Pferdehirt, (right) director of UW-Madison/Extension's new Master of Engineering in Professional Practice extended degree program, counsels a practicing engineer during the program's one-week August seminar. The program requires students to meet in Madison with fellow classmates and instructors for just one week, each summer of the two-year program. The rest of the coursework and communication with instructors and other students is done on-line.

quently. In fact, this engineer noted that he expects to be transferred to France in a few months, but he expects no change in his ability to successfully com-

plete the course work and graduate with his peers in 2001 — since he already completed much of his summer course work while on assignment in London!

— Jason Thompson

Long-Term Care Insurance Available

Long-Term Care Insurance is an optional insurance available to UW employees and annuitants, including their spouses, parents and spouse's parents. The Long-Term Care Insurance programs for university employees may cover expenses usually not covered by group health insurance, including long-term home health care, assisted living, community-based care (adult day care), and nursing home care. The Wisconsin Department of Employee Trust Funds monitors the programs.

You may apply for coverage at any time, but all applications are subject to medical underwriting. Some illnesses or pre-existing conditions will disqualify you from the plans. However, once your policy is issued, coverage will not be limited or excluded for any pre-existing conditions or illnesses.

There is no employer contribution for this benefit; you pay the full premium. The Commissioner of Insurance publishes a free Guide to Long-Term Care to help you evaluate your needs. Call 1-800-236-8517 for a copy.

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UW-Extension has helped measure public attitudes toward the Year 2000 problem as well. Polls conducted by Wisconsin Public Radio/St. Norbert's College and the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory have been used to gauge public opinion on various strategies — extreme and otherwise — to resolve Y2K problems.

Mark Lederer, a specialist with UW-Extension's Local Government

Center, is the university's link to the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Y2K Preparedness. "Extension education played a critically important role in building the type of confidence we see in the final report of the Governor's Commission," said Lederer. "The more people began to understand the nature of the problem and how they could respond, the more confident they became in their own abilities."

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