

# EXTENSION *Action*

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-EXTENSION | WINTER 2005/ANNUAL REPORT

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LAKE SUPERIOR PATHFINDERS



## UW-Extension builds leaders for a lifetime

The University of Wisconsin-Extension and partners offer a variety of programs that help youth and adults scale the heights to confident, effective leadership.

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Learning for life



Learning for life

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**On the cover**

The Lake Superior Pathfinders Environmental Leadership Program, a partnership of the University of Wisconsin-Extension and Northland College, helps youth navigate the path to leadership. See pp. 4-5 for more about how this hands-on environmental program empowers youth to take active roles in their communities.

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## Creating leaders with a vision for Wisconsin

University of Wisconsin-Extension Interim Chancellor Marv Van Kekerix discusses leadership development with Brian A. Rude. A former state legislator, Rude is director of external relations at Dairyland Power Cooperative in La Crosse. He also serves on the UW-Extension Board of Visitors.



Marv Van Kekerix,  
interim chancellor,  
UW-Extension

**VAN KEKERIX: What can the university do to help local and state officials improve their leadership skills?**

**RUDE:** Many of today's leaders benefit from formal educations they received at a University of Wisconsin campus. That's a good start. In keeping with the Wisconsin Idea, I believe that leadership-building programs ought to be offered in every corner of the state, in a variety of educational settings and formats, to people of all ages. In addition to teaching leadership skills, the university also plays an important role in facilitating policy deliberations on big issues facing our state.

**VAN KEKERIX: Is Wisconsin lacking in leadership capacity?**

**RUDE:** Leadership capabilities are uneven. In many Wisconsin communities, people are struggling to find leaders amidst deep economic challenges, dramatic demographic changes, and the evolution of new civic traditions. In other communities, we see a healthy number of people prepared for leadership roles in local government, business or community organizations. Across the state, one difficulty is a general reluctance to take risks. This means that leaders with bold ideas or a progressive vision can face strong resistance.

**VAN KEKERIX: In business, what kinds of leadership capabilities help people advance their careers?**

**RUDE:** The most important leadership capability is vision – being able to look forward, see the “big picture,” and align today's activities with that long-term view. A variety of experiences help build that vision, including creative thinking and a broad education. It also helps to have a sense of open-mindedness and natural curiosity about the world.



Brian A. Rude, director of external relations, Dairyland Power Cooperative

## WRLP equips citizens to become leaders

### Almost 70% of participants are elected to public office

Recent headline events have sparked widespread discussion about leaders and leadership. A national study on confidence in leadership, released in October 2005 by the Harvard University Center for Public Leadership, found that Americans are highly critical of the state of leadership. Almost two-thirds (66%) of those surveyed believe that there is a “leadership crisis” in the United States today, and 72% see grave consequences for the nation if leaders do not improve.

Survey respondents are also critical of their fellow citizens, with 82% agreeing that “Americans who don’t keep up on important issues are a big part of today’s leadership problem.”

#### UW-Extension develops leaders

The University of Wisconsin-Extension Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program (WRLP) equips state residents to become effective leaders. Over a two-year span, WRLP “leadership fellows” partici-

pate in classroom activities; field experiences; regional, national and international travel; and readings focusing on government, leadership, urban issues, individual/community rights, energy, diversity, technology, global economics and the environment.

#### Putting leadership skills to work

Since completing WRLP, Doug Mueller, a Fall Creek farmer, is looked to for leadership in his community. When President George W. Bush visited Eau Claire for a town-hall meeting in 2004, Mueller was selected by the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation to represent statewide agricultural interests. Using communication skills honed in WRLP, Mueller discussed Wisconsin agricultural policy with the president in front of a large live audience and the media.

WRLP alumna and Sparta registered nurse Sheri Fanning demonstrated her leadership skills in September as a volunteer helping Hurricane Katrina evacuees in a San Antonio,

#### PROGRAM IMPACTS

- 69% of Wisconsin Rural Leadership participants have been elected to local, county and state offices, boards or commissions.
- 20% serve or have served on foundation, hospital and community organization boards and in other town or municipal roles.
- Alumni help build clinics and schools, start nonprofit organizations, and assist with national disaster relief efforts.

Texas, shelter. In addition to direct-care work with evacuees, Fanning worked closely with Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention officials, physicians and Mexican military officers.

#### WRLP makes a difference

Fanning says, “What I learned in ‘Rural Leadership’ has helped me [in] making good decisions, working through problems, knowing how to conduct myself with diverse groups, knowing when to exert myself, and when to step back and let others lead in a different way. Having gone through WRLP made all the difference.” —Linda Murray

For more information: WRLP Executive Director JoAnn Stormer, (608) 263-0817; [www.uwex.edu/ces/wrlp](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wrlp)

Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program alumnus Doug Mueller and President George W. Bush discuss agricultural policy at a 2004 town-hall meeting in Eau Claire.



# Hands-on learning helps youth disco

PHOTOS: LAKE SUPERIOR PATHFINDERS



The Lake Superior Pathfinders Environmental Leadership Program allows youth to immerse themselves in environmental issues, build their leadership capabilities, and apply their new knowledge and skills for the well-being of their own communities.

“Pathfinders: Those who **know not the way**, but who are sent to **discover** it. We are these people; whether or not we were when we came, **we are now.**”

**W**ith these words, high-schooler Marie DeMars sums up her experience in the Lake Superior Pathfinders Environmental Leadership Program. The program, which springs from a University of Wisconsin-Extension – Northland College partnership, builds youth leadership around critical environmental issues through experiential learning on Lake Superior.

**More than a leadership program** “Pathfinders is more than a leadership program, it’s a journey of self-discovery and skill development with the goal of empowering people to take active roles in their communities,” says Elizabeth Post, envi-

ronmental education specialist with UW-Extension and director of the Lake Superior Pathfinders Program at Northland College’s Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute in Ashland.

### Real-life learning

Pathfinders focuses on the complex interaction between environmental protection, economic development and community needs, and the impact of these factors on conservation and land-use decisions. The Lake Superior Basin is a “living class-

Pathfinders’ participants build leadership skills through physical challenges including climbing walls, kayaking and camping.

room,” supporting learning based on a sustainability model that balances social, environmental and economic perspectives.

Youth learn about leadership while participating in ropes courses and climbing walls, exploring estuaries, kayaking the sea caves, and camping on beaches. Students gain insight into the lake’s cultural significance by interacting with elders and educators of the Anishnabe, or Chippewa, tribe. Northland College’s Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute and UW-Extension educators and field counselors facilitate learning with guest speakers and natural resource professionals.

### Profound influence

The weeklong Pathfinders experience has a profound influence on grade 9 through 12 students, as evidenced by their reflections on what they learned and a newfound sense of their own power to effect change.



# Over the way to lead

“You start out thinking that you’re coming here to help out and save your community. Once you leave you realize you’ve really helped and saved yourself! The relationships and changes you make will change you forever,” says a report by returning students, called Navigators, who serve as guides.

Another student, Lucy Clements, recorded in her journal: “Never in my life have I met people with such passion. These were teenagers who I could actually have faith in; whom I felt would really put actions behind their words and live their lives looking for ways to shed light on ... environmental indifference. Through these participants I learned how to have faith in people.”

## Prepared to change the world

The lasting impact of Pathfinders may ripple out into the lives of these students for years, as they work on environmental issues in their own communities. Their increased knowledge and skills enable them to participate as engaged and caring citizens in changing things for the better.

“I am more motivated to take a stand on environmental issues and go home and do something about them,” says Betsy Baertlein, a 2005 participant. “I also have more confidence in myself as a leader.”

“I would definitely recommend this program,” wrote the parent of one student. “I like how you combine environmental topics with leader-

## GROWING IN SIZE AND INFLUENCE

- In 2005, the Pathfinders environmental education/leadership development program reached 1,162 youth throughout the state during the school year.
- In 2005, 85 high school students – 59 from Wisconsin – participated in three Pathfinders’ summer sessions. In 2004, 38 youth participated in summer sessions, and an adult program was piloted.
- Pre- and post-assessments show that students’ confidence in their leadership abilities increased as a result of participating in Pathfinders. A follow-up survey is in progress to assess participants’ progress on their personal action plans and their level of involvement in their high schools and colleges.

ship training. Not only did you make them aware of critical environmental concerns, but you taught them how to take action.”

As one student summarized, “I’ve found accomplishing goals is not as tough as I thought. Also, there are powerful people here who may just change the world one day.”

## UW-Extension – Northland College partnership

Funded in its first two years by a Wisconsin Coastal Management

grant awarded to UW-Extension, Pathfinders, now in its third year, is funded by Northland College with student tuition covering only room and board and supplies. The college, which contracts with UW-Extension to direct Pathfinders, is seeking funding to continue the program.

—Jo Futrell

For more information and summer 2006 application forms: Lake Superior Pathfinders Program Director Elizabeth Post, (715) 682-1482; [www.northland.edu/pathfinders](http://www.northland.edu/pathfinders); [Pathfinders@northland.edu](mailto:Pathfinders@northland.edu)

We did it! The Pathfinders program reached more than 1,200 youth in 2005 through environmental/leadership education programming during the school year and three weeklong summer sessions.



## 4-H develops tomorrow's leaders

On a cool night last spring, about 30 Door County youth discovered how it feels to be without adequate shelter or food. They moved out of comfortable homes and into a village of cardboard boxes. Their mission: raise awareness about the need for affordable housing and raise money for Habitat for Humanity.

"We limited the amount of food we had, and everyone agreed not to leave until morning," says Ashley Viste, a 4-H member from Sturgeon Bay and organizer of the event. "We wanted to try to imagine what it would be like to be without shelter."

**Spotlighting affordable housing**  
Door County is an upscale vacation destination, and many year-round

residents work for low wages in its restaurants, shops and hotels. "It's almost impossible to find decent housing at a price these families can afford," she explains.

The cardboard city project raised almost \$2,000. It attracted attention from passersby and earned a front-page story in the *Door County Advocate*.

### 4-H builds leadership skills

Viste, now a University of Wisconsin-Madison freshman, credits her 4-H participation for her leadership skills. She is a past president of the state 4-H Youth Council, participated in planning of 4-H youth state conferences, and currently is a member of the Wisconsin 4-H Foundation Board. She has held many other

leadership roles in Door County.

### 4-Hers serve their communities

Viste is one of thousands of Wisconsin youth who have gained impressive leadership credentials through involvement in 4-H Youth Development. They serve as members of city councils, county commissions, school boards, chambers of commerce, fair boards, teen courts, 4-H leader boards and other governance boards.

—Mary Ellen Bell

For more information: 4-H Youth Development Agent Dawn Kuelz, [dawn.kuelz@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:dawn.kuelz@ces.uwex.edu), (920) 746-2260



Kimberly Stezela receives her certificate from John Palmer Smith, executive director of the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management.

DEB GENEROTZKY

## Certificate builds nonprofit leadership

Wisconsin communities depend on nonprofit organizations to provide important services to their citizens. As a result, highly skilled nonprofit leaders are in demand. To meet this need, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Continuing Education, in partnership with the Helen Bader Institute for Nonprofit Management, has offered the Professional Certificate Program in Nonprofit Management since October 2002. Consisting of 17 six-hour workshops and a four-hour capstone session, the program helps current and future staff and

managers of local nonprofit agencies be more effective leaders and better managers.

"Our noncredit nonprofit management certificate helps today's nonprofit leader incorporate strategic skills necessary for success throughout the community," explains Shirley Bufford, certificate program manager. "It also provides the competencies critical for survival within the growing nonprofit sector."

Kimberly Stezela, program director at the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at UW-Milwaukee,



Ashley Viste (inset) credits her participation in University of Wisconsin-Extension 4-H for developing her leadership skills.

Jonathan Kay (above), a seventh grader and 4-H member from Forestville, was one of about 30 youth who spent a night in a cardboard box to call attention to the lack of affordable housing in Door County and raise money for Habitat for Humanity.

## capacity

completed the certificate last February. “This program provided the perfect blend of practical tools, expert advice and networking opportunities,” she says. “It was immediately impactful, effective and relevant to fulfilling our mission.”

More than 200 students have participated in at least one Professional Certificate in Nonprofit Management workshop. Sixteen, including Stezela, have completed the entire series.

—Amy Pikalek

For more information: Certificate Program Manager Shirley Bufford, [sbufford@uwm.edu](mailto:sbufford@uwm.edu); [www.ProfDevNonprofitCert.uwm.edu](http://www.ProfDevNonprofitCert.uwm.edu)

## Strengthening Wisconsin’s local governments

Wisconsin’s 5.4 million residents depend on their local governments to balance budgets, provide a wide variety of services, and plan for a safe and vital future. The University of Wisconsin-Extension’s Local Government Center (LGC) provides convenient, low-cost training to help local government leaders meet these expectations with knowledge and confidence.

Rick Stadelman, executive director of the Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA), explains why LGC training is important: “We have a 20 to 25% turnover in elected officials every two years, so new and continuing education is critical.”

Each year almost 4,000 local government officials participate in LGC programs focusing on current issues affecting local government officials. Recent topics include developing budgets, rural economic development, implementing Government Accounting Standards Board recommendations, conducting boards of review, and running an annual town meeting.

To accommodate government officials’ busy schedules and tight travel budgets, programs are available in all 72 counties (usually at county courthouses or Extension offices) through UW-Extension Instructional Communications Systems’ WisLine Teleconferencing services. Audio-streamed versions, CDs and audiocassettes of the programs are also available.

WTA’s Stadelman praises the program’s instructors for their “expertise and wherewithal to get high-quality information in a timely manner.”

—Michael Jones

For more information: LGC Director Chuck Law, [chuck.law@uwex.edu](mailto:chuck.law@uwex.edu), (608) 265-2501; [www.uwex.edu/lgc/](http://www.uwex.edu/lgc/)

### ADDITIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Nonprofit Institute, UW-Parkside:

[www.uwp.edu/departments/community.partnerships/npi/](http://www.uwp.edu/departments/community.partnerships/npi/)

Nonprofit development workshops, UW-Madison:

[www.dcs.wisc.edu/pda/nonprofit.htm](http://www.dcs.wisc.edu/pda/nonprofit.htm)

Northwoods Nonprofits, UW-Superior:

[www.uwsuper.edu/nwnp/about.htm](http://www.uwsuper.edu/nwnp/about.htm)

Center for Community Economic Development, UW-Extension:

[www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cced/)



SCOTT PAULUS

## UW-Extension reaches out to minority entrepreneurs

**L**ucy Holifield, director of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Small Business Development Center (SBDC), knows all about PeerSpectives, the peer advice program developed by the Lowe Foundation in collaboration with University of Wisconsin-Extension. She was trained by the foundation to facilitate the model for second-stage business owners.

But Holifield found that the model didn't fit the needs of the minority community in Milwaukee. "Minority businesses frequently didn't meet the criteria for minimum revenues and double-digit growth, and the cost to participate was too high. I changed the criteria but stuck with the protocol," Holifield says.

She launched the Minority Business Roundtable in October 2004 with 10 minority business owners – six men and four women.

A year later, four members of the first roundtable are planning a joint business venture, and Holifield is about to organize a second roundtable. The roundtable fills an acute need for minority entrepreneurs. "The object is for them to experience the roundtable and see the benefits," Holifield says. "Once they've done that, they can then migrate to the mainstream roundtable and expand their circles." —*Patricia Simms*

UW-Milwaukee SBDC Director Lucy Holifield organizes peer roundtables that meet the special needs of minority entrepreneurs.

For more information: UW-Milwaukee SBDC Director Lucy Holifield, [lucyh@uwm.edu](mailto:lucyh@uwm.edu), (414) 227-3242



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