



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – December 2015

Fond du Lac County is a historical “hotbed” of entrepreneurial based start-ups.

- [STEM and Entrepreneurship: Skills for the new economy](#)
- [Helping Young Teens Gain Life Skills](#)
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STEM and Entrepreneurship: Skills for the new economy

"Teachers and principals in schools from Tennessee to Washington, D.C. are making big strides in preparing students with skills for the new economy--problem solving, critical thinking, science, technology, engineering, and math."

President Obama, 2013

Fond du Lac County is a historical “hotbed” of entrepreneurial based start-ups. “Entrepreneurs, in the purest sense, are those who identify a need—*any* need—and fill it. It’s a primordial urge, independent of product, service, industry or market.” STEM curriculum embodies how to identify and fill a need, and learn about the economy.

The following is a laundry list of work being done with the Fond du Lac School District [STEM Academy](#) and [STEM Institute](#), in cooperation with [IGNITE! Fond du Lac County](#) and UW Extension:

Engaging the STEM Academy 7th and 8th graders on a hackerspace (a version of makerspace) which focuses on innovation and creativity through understanding and discovery. These sessions have been with as few as ten students and as many as thirty. This lab focuses on the tinkering efforts that spawn new product ideas and posing “What if?” scenarios.

The application of PBL (project based learning) and ideas on furthering the maker movement are fostering innovation in developing new economic strategies. The tinkering school of thought is a relatively new idea in K-12 curriculum.

“Success is in the doing, and failures are celebrated and analyzed. Problems become puzzles and obstacles disappear.”

Gever Tulley, 2009

An ongoing relationship with the STEM Academy has given UW-Extension the opportunity to mentor three separate teams in a STEM based nation-wide competition called [eCybermission](#). These teams will develop problem statements and use scientific or engineering based problem solving in order to help formulate solutions for community issues.

Helping Young Teens Gain Life Skills

During the past year Pamela Nelson, through the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP), has partnered with Youth for Christ to teach six 60 minute classes. Youth for Christ (Parent Life) is a mentorship support group for pregnant and parenting teens. The teens are between 14-21 years old.

Pamela Nelson worked with 33 different teens teaching the following topics this past year: Planning to Get Enough Money for Food, Money Comes and Goes, Food Needs and Wants, Choosing Foods from [MyPlate](#), Good Foods to Have On Hand, and Eating Away from Home.

Some of the comments of things learned from the lessons include: Make a budget before going grocery shopping; Stop eating out so much; Make a budget for myself; Set a better spending plan; Things I thought I needed but were only wants; Be more cautious about what I spend because it adds up; How to manage buying food when living alone; Use coupons and find ads with cheap prices; Setting aside a bag of food for emergencies; Make a list; Making a better shopping list before I go shopping; Don't shop hungry - you will spend more and get stuff you don't need.

WNEP supports families helping these young teens to gain life skills that help them become independent adults and provide a good home to their children. One example of how WNEP supports families can be seen in the comment from a young 20 year old mom, "When I came to Parent Life I was 15 and pregnant. The meal planning and budgeting classes didn't mean a lot to me until at 18 I found myself homeless. After getting my act together, I realized that I needed to go back and look through the classes that I had taken and found that the meal planning and budgeting classes now had a lot of meaning in my life now that I was out on my own. I often go back to Parent Life when Pam is teaching to learn more."

Co-Parenting for a Lifetime

When a family goes through divorce or separation, it can be difficult to adjust to the changes. Education and resources offer strategies to educate parents and children about the impact of the family transition and adjustment to their new life as co-parents. Further, co-parenting education and resources are needed by families involved with paternity parenting too.

"Living Apart-Parenting Together," co-parent education for court required divorcing or separating individuals with children, started in 2006 and continues to be collaboratively taught by Fond du Lac County Family Court Services and Fond du Lac County UW Extension Family Living Programs on a monthly basis. *Living Apart-Parenting Together* programming is focused on helping parents understand the impact of divorce on their children and acknowledging the important role both parents continue to play in their children's lives. In 2015, the program worked with 353 individuals and the approximate number of minor children involved with these individuals' lives was 406.

"Keeping It About the Kids!" started in 2014 and is collaboratively taught by the above mentioned. This collaboration provides co-parent education for court required paternity cases helping to address the specific co-parenting needs for the paternity audience. *Keeping It About the Kids* program emphasizes early child development, including brain development, plus focuses on helping parents acknowledge the important their co-parent role plays in their children's lives. In 2015, the program reached 87 individuals and the approximate number of minor children involved with these individuals' lives was 84.

Results from the end of session evaluations report significant gains from participants' comments: "Make a strong effort to maintain a good relationship with my ex and handle our issues without involving the kids" and "I think the 'I' messaging is going to be very important. Also, direct communication with my ex and not asking kids questions. 'I' statements....I normally cast blame."

Extension Connection Contributors:

Mike Winkler, Entrepreneurship Educator

Pamela Nelson, WNEP Educator

Shelley Tidemann, Family Living Educator/Co-Dept Head

Fond du Lac County UW-Extension

400 University Drive, AE-227, Fond du Lac, WI 54935

Phone: (920) 929-3170; Fax: (920) 929-3181

Hearing Impaired Relay: 711

<http://fonddulac.uwex.edu>

