



# Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – October 2015

*Enriching the lives of families through education and community connections.*

- [Green Meadows “Circle of Friendship”](#)
- [Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities](#)
- [Co-Parenting Education in Fond du Lac County](#)

## **Green Meadows “Circle of Friendship”**

During the summer of 2015 Denise Retzleff and Araceli Oswald visited “Green Meadows,” a neighborhood in North Fond du Lac where the majority of the residents are Latinos. A total of 15 youth ages 5-13 years old participated in the learning activities that 4-H Youth Development brought to this community.

The youth named the group “Circle of Friendship” and created a sign which they displayed every time we met. This allowed them to increase their sense of belonging. During our 5 sessions youth learned about the 4-H program; physics by launching paper rockets using air as fuel; teamwork, communication and cooperation through fun activities; healthy living by recognizing food groups and the importance of staying active; to be creative by transforming recycled materials into crafts and to make their own ice cream.

The response of youth who participated in the summer program was great. They took turns taking the “circle of friendship” sign home and bringing it back for the next meeting. They also expressed their interest to meet more often and throughout the year. They enjoyed all the projects. They were cooperative, well behaved. The older members helped the younger ones and truly enjoyed having something to take home and show their parents. There was a sense of pride as each one of them talked about their project. Making ice cream was everyone’s favorite!

Flood Homes, Inc. (property owner), made this summer program possible by allowing us to meet at this location and has expressed their continuous support of the activities that 4-H is bringing to this community. We will continue our efforts to reach out to the Latino community.

## **Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities**

As part of the IGNITE! Entrepreneurship Network, Diana Hammer Tscheschlok jumped at the chance to attend the *Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities* conference from Michigan State University Extension. On the five-hour drives to and from, she listened to the audio book *Community: A Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block. His work is nationally known for the authentic conversations he fosters with groups wanting to transform their communities. With his ideas soaking into her brain at the same time as learning entrepreneurship strategies, she is sharing the following insights:

### Small, Slow, & Steady

*“Changes that begin on a large scale, are initiated or imposed from the top, and are driven to produce quick wins inevitably produce few lasting results....sustainable changes in community occur locally on a small scale, happen slowly, and are initiated at grassroots level.” (Block, p. 26)*

Sturgis, Michigan, initiated a focus on entrepreneurship in 2011 ([www.GenerateSturgis.com](http://www.GenerateSturgis.com)). This collaborative effort has no budget; they receive local philanthropic gifts as needed. They have no permanent staff; they have volunteers who give personal time and pro-bono professional services. They have no detailed plan of what they

want to achieve by when, yet they have achieved much by staying focused on their mission and taking one project at a time.

Key Points:

- They started with an idea and tried it out. If it worked, they did it again. Going big is less important than doing it well.
- “We aren’t waiting for money or policy. We’re just doing it.”

Risk Is Real

*“What is the price I am willing to pay for the success of the whole effort?” (Block, p. 137)*

Everyone knows entrepreneurs are risk takers, but even supporting entrepreneurship takes risk and personal sacrifice. In Rapid City, MI, young people learning with an MSU Extension educator started a coffee shop. Young people built the business with adult support. When it opened, the business was profitable. However, during the five years of planning, the young people made many costly mistakes. At one point, board members had their wages garnished when the finance volunteer forgot to file taxes.

Key Points:

- Working together to transform communities takes both personal risk and organizational change.
- Entrepreneurs try, adjust, and try again. Set-backs and challenges are part of the learning and fundamental to eventual success.

### **Co-Parenting Education in Fond du Lac County**

Divorce and separation are real in families -- about 40% of all first marriages end in divorce, but they still have serious impacts on families. Children, especially, are affected when a parental relationship ends. One major way that children are affected by a break-up is when they are exposed to conflict between their parents. In fact, parental conflict affects children negatively regardless of whether their parents divorce or not. Problems brought on by parental disagreements can appear in different ways -- a drop in school performance, behavior problems at school, anxiety, and depression. Research has identified the skills needed to make co-parenting (parenting together while living apart) relationships cooperative, and many parents are very receptive to helpful co-parenting programs that minimize the effects of the divorce/separation on their children.

For more than 14 years, UW Extension Family Living Education in Fond du Lac County and the Fond du Lac County Family Court Commissioner office have collaborated to conduct monthly co-parenting workshops for divorcing/separating parents of minor children. On average, 300 individuals attend these classes annually. Michelle Tidemann, Fond du Lac County Family Living Educator, co-teacher, additionally offered, through a pilot program, 8 weeks of positive co-parenting text messages to parents who attended the classes. Preliminary results show the parents liked the reinforcing positive co-parenting messages and very few dropped from the 8 week offering. Upon securing funding, the texting project will be re-instated in 2016. Additionally, Tidemann and the Fond du Lac County Family Courts office have begun to offer paternity co-parent education. In 2015, 79 paternity co-parent individuals attended classes that are held every other month.

Extension Connection Contributors:

Araceli Oswald, 4H Youth Development Assistant

Diana Hammer Tscheschlok, Community, Natural Resource & Economic Development 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>

