



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – April 2013

During Christmas, Weeping Willow 4-H Club of the Waupun area adopted a family and bought presents for them as a part of their community service project.

- [Community Service Projects through 4-H](#)
- [Youth Tractor and Machinery Safety Training and Certification](#)
- [Sustaining Family Relationships](#)

Community Service Projects through 4-H

Community service is an important element of 4-H; during the past year, all of Fond du lac County's 21 clubs have participated in some form of community service, contributing over 50 service projects that took place within their communities. The projects were diverse and encompassed five categories: projects that improved the environment, events held within the community to benefit others, services in partnership with community organizations, services to youth, families and individuals in the community, as well as services to the elderly.

Club members expressed that the benefits received from volunteering are:

- Learning to respect others and understand those who are different
- Discovering that there are people right in their community who don't have the ability to afford common necessities
- Realizing the importance of giving back to the community, understand that giving even a little can make a huge impact
- Advanced leadership skills, learned how to be organized when coordinating an event
- Established a better understanding of citizenship and pride for one's community
- Gained a bigger appreciation for the environment
- Expanded their sense of empathy when working with people and families who are struggling with different issues

Youth Tractor and Machinery Safety Training and Certification

No business or industry can hire a 14-year-old youth to work around machinery. No industry, that is, except agriculture. When working on a farm, the owner/employer or employees act as their own workplace safety officer in an environment that is extremely dangerous. Statistics tell us that thousands of people get hurt or killed on farms each year. For these reasons, farm safety education is extremely important.

The Fond du Lac County UW-Extension Office offers the Wisconsin Tractor and Machinery Certification Safety Program to county youth on an annual basis. Youth who work on farms are required to take the course if they are at least 12 years of age and want to drive tractor on a public road as they work for their parents or if they

are 14 years old and want to operate farm machinery for a non-related employer. These guidelines are set forth by federal and state statutes. In Fond du Lac County, the course consists of lectures, guest speakers, videos, and hands-on activities at local farm machinery dealers. Participants must also pass a written and driving examination after the 20 hours of instruction are concluded. In 2013, sixteen youth successfully completed the program. The Fond du Lac County Sheriff's Department, volunteer fire departments, and county emergency medical personnel participate in the training and have wholeheartedly endorsed the program.

Sustaining Family Relationships

Children adjust successfully to divorce and separation when they maintain a close, personal and supportive relationship with both parents and have parents who can cooperate with one another in a non-conflicted way. Fond du Lac County Family Court Services staff and UW-Extension Family Living Educator Shelley Tidemann provide a monthly educational class to court ordered parents who are separated or in the process of divorce. "Living Apart-Parenting Together" emphasizes understanding how to keep their children out of the middle of their divorce process and through communication strategies improve child focused decision making.

Those attending the co-parenting program report increased awareness and willingness to use "I" messages to aid in co-parenting communication, importance in helping the child have a positive relationship with the other parent, and to talk directly to the other parent rather than using the child to be the messenger. Approximately 300 individuals attend the "Living Apart-Parenting Together" class each year.

A need for co-parenting education for paternity audiences has been identified by Fond du Lac County Family Court Services. Tidemann is working with Family Court Services, designing a class that is anticipated to begin this fall.

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