



# Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – July 2014

*On-farm management teams have been gaining popularity over the past decade.*

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## **AmeriCorps VISTA**

As a full-time staff member at the UW-Extension Office of Fond du Lac County over the past two years, AmeriCorps VISTA member Miguel Gonzales has worked across UW-Extension program areas to offer research-based programs to people representing the diverse audiences residing in the county. During his first yearlong term of service, Gonzales collaboratively established a 4-H afterschool program called the “Young Dreamers,” a name coined by youth members of this program indicating their aspirations for future success in their education and career. This group meets twice a month during the school year and helps youth develop an array of life skills, including communication, public speaking, teamwork, and leadership. Gonzales is currently in the process of finalizing collaborations with various college professors from UW-Fond du Lac and Moraine Park Technical College to establish a service learning program that will see the time and talent of local college students funneled into the “Young Dreamers” program, while allowing the college students to meaningfully employ classroom knowledge in a practical setting.

During his second term of service, the purview of Miguel’s position was broadened to include assignments within the CNRED and Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) areas in addition to his portfolio of duties with 4-H. In collaboration with CNRED Educator Diana Hammer Tscheschlok, Gonzales co-implemented the Going Solo entrepreneur training course. In this capacity, Gonzales led bilingual marketing efforts for the course, and co-taught weekly classes in the five-week course. A cumulative evaluation—including data collected from both Going Solo course offerings—indicates that participants experienced a 38% cumulative average increase in entrepreneurial readiness based on the evaluation of 4 specific indicators. In collaboration with WNEP Coordinator Amanda Miller, Gonzales helped conduct a Fond du Lac School District-wide food access/hunger survey, and also provided strategic advice to UW-Extension staff to create a food insecurity simulation capable of being implemented readily by organizations across Wisconsin.

## **Dairy Management Teams**

On-farm management teams have been gaining popularity over the past decade. As farms become larger and more complicated, many dairy farmers are implementing management teams for their operations. Dairy management teams utilize the method of assessing strengths, weaknesses and opportunities with a team approach.

Dairy management teams are comprised of the dairy producer/owner, key employees of the farm, the Extension agent, dairy field plant representative, nutritionist, veterinarian and other key service people to sit down as a group to address specific issues on a particular farm. The roles of this agent are multi-purpose: to serve as a team leader, a facilitator, an educator and a record keeper for the team. Currently the Fond du Lac County Dairy & Livestock Agent is facilitating two management teams.

Based on team meeting discussions facilitated by Tina Kohlman, a Waupun area dairy farm increased milk quality by reducing somatic cell count (SCC) from 376,000 (September 2013) to 234,000 (April 2014). Because of the 142,000 reduction in SCC, the farm saw a \$0.52 per cwt weight milk quality premium, or an additional \$7,238 for the month of April on 580 cows producing 80 pounds of milk per cow. The team has met five times over 10 months to assess issues regarding milk quality and develop management practices to improve. Practices adopted to reduce SCC include monitoring and freshening of freestall beds more often, maintaining freestall beds at optimum levels daily, replacement of screen for manure separator every 6 months and increased employee training.

Dairy management teams have fostered relationships between the dairy producer, agri-business professionals and this agent while creating a rewarding experience for everyone involved. By developing effective communications between producers and service people, service people have a better understanding of farm goals and producers have become more familiar and trusting of their service people. Instead of becoming frustrated by trying to accomplish too much at one time, farms are now focusing on many “mini-goals” in order to achieve much larger long-term goals. This renewed energy, in turn, leads to the establishment of new goals and works to achieve them in a sequential manner. Consequently morale has increased on the farms and there is a renewed sense of pride and accomplishment for not only the farm, but also the service professionals who work with the farm.

### **WNEP Collaborates with Fresh Start**

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) collaborates with ADVOCAP’s Fresh Start program. Fresh Start is a non-traditional employment and training program serving 17-24 year old youth to help them overcome the barriers that have prevented them from reaching their goals.

WNEP meets with Fresh Start once a month for a 2 hour cooking/food safety/healthy eating class. During the June class, food safety was the topic with the food preps being: Hamburger Veggie Packet, “Doctored” Baked Beans and Fantasia Fruit Salad.

After teaching about the 4 steps to prevent bacteria growth: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill an evaluation was given to the participants. When asked the question “What is one thing you learned today?” comments included: “How to fight bacteria so I won’t get sick”, “Food should only stay out for 1 hour in the summer”, “That the temperature for chicken to be cooked was lowered to 165°,” “Trying new things is good”, and “How to make baked beans”.

Food safety is an important topic to be covered for personal health reasons, as well as for the young children of the participants. Our food safety information is also making an impact in the community when Fresh Start is out in the public doing community service like making brown bag lunches for Salvation Army.

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