



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – May 2013

A women's farm financial management meeting was held in April.

- ["Heart of the Farm" Women's Farm Financial Management Meeting](#)
- [4-H Fridays – Fun for Participants, Leadership for Youth Presenters](#)
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"Heart of the Farm" Women's Farm Financial Management Meeting

According to the 2007 Ag Census there are 9,176 Wisconsin farms that identified a woman as the principal farm operator. This represents a 25% increase over the 2002 Ag Census data and a 58% increase over 1997 data. The 2007 Ag Census also indicates there are 38,263 women identified as an operator on a Wisconsin farm (farms can identify up to three operators).

Women who are farming with male partners tend to focus their farm management responsibilities on the financial recordkeeping, employee management, and livestock care, especially young stock. While these are specific responsibilities and specific risk management areas they control, women farmers are also a part of the strategic and long range decisions, such as expansion and other large capital investment decisions.

This past month UW-Extension Dairy Agents Tina Kohlman & Scott Gunderson hosted a "Heart of the Farm" Women's Financial Management Meeting to provide farm women support in management and financial decision making, to help connect them with agricultural resources and to create a support network with other individuals who face the same experiences, challenges and roles they do. Topics included: better understanding yourself and others; time management; communication; and cultivating financial health. Fifty-eight individuals were in attendance from Fond du Lac, Calumet, and Manitowoc Counties and the Tri-County area. Comments regarding the meeting include:

- "I just wanted you to know how much these workshops mean to me. The chance to network with others in the field (no pun intended) and share ideas, concerns, and general information with other women who have many of the same issues is wonderful. The very nature of our work can be so isolating and so this forum allows not only an exchange of information but a support network as well."
- "It was a great networking opportunity for me and I took away a lot of valuable information."
- "I thoroughly enjoyed the program and opportunity to meet with such a fabulous group of ladies. Thank you again for making this possible. Keep up the great work!"
- "Farm wives go through a lot of hard times working with their husbands. Thanks for helping us take one more step forward to enjoy everything that farm life has to offer us and our families."

The program was supported by area UW-Extension offices, UW-Center for Dairy Profitability, Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, Farm Service Agency and a USDA Risk Management Agency Grant.

4-H Fridays – Fun for Participants, Leadership for Youth Presenters

4-H Fridays were recently held afterschool at the Boys and Girls Club’s Johnsonville and Chegwin sites. Nine 4-H teens and five adults led mini lessons on card making, community service, finger knitting, recycling, rabbits, horses, cookie decorating and making goop. 172 elementary school children participated. The sessions are fun and hands-on, with an opportunity for children to meet 4-H members and learn about 4-H activities. The 4-H youth leaders who plan and teach the topics enjoy the opportunity to present as much as the children like to attend. When asked why they volunteer, the teens’ responses include:

- I love seeing the children learn new things.
- I enjoy presenting.
- I like spreading the word about 4-H.

Through being presenters, youth are experiencing the essential elements of positive youth development which include independence (deciding what to teach and gathering materials), generosity (volunteering their time), belonging (working together on an effort), and mastery (sharing a topic they have interest in and learning how to teach it to others.)

VISTA Hispanic Outreach – Miguel Gonzales

Since my arrival in Fond du Lac on August 17, 2012, I have worked assiduously to build relationships with community leaders and stakeholders. My professional motivation for cultivating these relationships—which is distinct from my personal interest in integrating myself into the community— is tied to my obligation to build a sustainable 4-H community club that will respond to the culture, needs, aspirations and interests of Hispanic youth and their families in Fond du Lac County. Of late, I have made very significant advances toward fulfilling this professional obligation.

Having formed sturdy, trusting relationships with numerous families who attend St. Mary’s Catholic Church (my local place of worship) and with Fr. Max Tzul, I have been able to form an, as yet, informal 4-H club that has the potential to become a *registered* club in the next several months. Youth enrollment in this group has reached a peak of about 20 members; this rough figure has held over the last few sessions (held biweekly), seeming to indicate a firm commitment to the club from parents and children alike. During our sessions I carry out educational activities for our members, in collaboration—since his arrival in January, 2013—with my colleague Carmelo Dávila, and (more recently) with former UW-Extension/4-H Intern, Megan Schlafer. Carmelo has been especially helpful in this effort, reducing the work burden that previously fell solely on my shoulders and making his own contributions to this project. Megan has also been a great help and asset to our collaborative effort.

I have also cultivated a strong working relationship with Ripon High School Spanish Teacher, Kat Griffith. Carmelo, Mrs. Griffith and I have been collaborating to form a registered 4-H club with her Hispanic students. Three participants in this group have already completed one very significant activity as part of this non-registered club: a college “shadowing” experience in which they were able to spend a day at Ripon College, attending classes and getting acquainted with college life under the guidance of faculty, staff and students. This 4-H group will emphasize—not to the exclusion of other activities—college and career preparation. With time, I believe that this group could easily become a registered 4-H community club in Fond du Lac County.

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