



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – October 2012

Over 100 gardeners and families have plots at the Community Garden.

- [Dairy Farm Safety Short Course](#)
- [Community Garden](#)
- [Rent Smart: Tenant Education](#)

Dairy Farm Safety Short Course

Dairy farming continues to be a high hazard occupation. According to the 2004 National Occupational Injury Surveillance of Production Agriculture, an estimated 80,300 (9.2 injuries per hour) work-related injuries occurred to adults on farms. Every day across the nation, approximately 243 agricultural workers suffer a lost-work time injury, with five percent of these injuries resulting in permanent impairment. Based on this data and other state data, this past year the Wisconsin office for Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) initiated a local enforcement program (LEP) to ensure the safety of dairy farm workers with a focus on dairy operations with 11 or more employees. Included in this effort were unannounced safety inspections of 12 randomly picked dairy farms across Wisconsin. This has resulted in the need for resources for dairy producers to help them develop an on-farm OSHA compliant safety and health program for their operation.

This past month UW-Extension Fond du Lac County piloted a “Dairy Farm Safety Short Course” developed by UW-River Falls and UW-Extension through an OSHA Susan A. Hardwood Grant to assist, train and provide resources to dairy producers as they develop an on-farm OSHA compliant safety and health program for their operation. The goal of the short course was to help producers by:

- Teaching them their role and responsibilities regarding OSHA
- Providing materials, guidance and training for dairy producers to meet on-farm OSHA requirements
- Teaching how to recognize and prevent on-farm safety and health hazards within the workplace
- Providing resources to ensure on-farm all safety training is completed correctly
- Creating and maintaining required documentation regarding safety and health, and
- Helping producers create a safe working environment on the farm

Nine producers representing five farms and approximately 75 employees participated in a UW-Extension “Dairy Farm Safety Short Course.” Producers completed the comprehensive ten-hour training provided in two classes taught by Fond du Lac County Dairy Agent Tina Kohlman, Brown County Agriculture Agent Mark Hagedorn and UW-Extension Farm Safety Specialist Cheryl Skjoolas.

Additional programming related to farm safety will include farm safety walk-throughs on local operations to help dairy producers develop a “plan-of-attack” as they develop an on-farm safety program and the continuation of dairy workers’ training which will include safety protocols and resources for employees.

Community Garden

Why have community gardens? Gardens provide fresh fruits and vegetables. Gardens can help build more than healthy individuals and families—they can help build healthy communities, too. The work of community gardening links people of every age, ethnicity, and background. Neighbors meet one another in the gardens, building ties of friendship and mutual assistance. The process of planning and developing a community garden is an exercise in community empowerment and democracy. It’s a process that teaches leadership, responsibility, and service.

Fond du Lac County’s Community Garden which was started in 2003 is located on ten acres of Fond du Lac County Airport property at the corner of Pioneer Road and Grove Street. The number of plots has increased to 208 with over 6-1/2 acres under till and 104 gardeners and families. The number of families remains about the same every year, but more of the acreage is now being used with larger plots. The plots range in size from 20’ x 20’ to 20’ x 80’. Of the 104 gardening families, 69% are white and have 110 plots, 22% are Hmong and have 57 plots, and 9% are Hispanic and have 23 plots.

Rent Smart: Tenant Education

Renters currently make up more than 36 million households—more than one-third of all the households in the United States. In Fond du Lac County, 28% of total occupied housing units available are occupied by renters. More people are finding themselves in need of information to help them successfully navigate the renting process and develop better landlord/tenant relationships.

In 2007/2008 the Rent Smart curriculum was updated and re-introduced to meet the growing number of individuals in the rental market. In Fond du Lac County, the Rent Smart tenant education program is being offered to address this growing need by Family Living Educator Michelle Tidemann. Rent Smart provides practical information to help people find and keep a decent place to live. Rent Smart is a partnership with FDL Housing Authority, Redevelopment Planning office-City of Fond du Lac, FDL Landlord Association and UW-Extension.

Participants in the Rent Smart program experience eleven different topics of instruction over a series of two three-hour workshops, taught every other month by the partnership Tidemann leads. So far in 2012, 88 individuals have participated. Participants receive a certificate for completing Rent Smart. The Fond du Lac City/County Housing Authority and Fond du Lac Landlords Association recognize this certificate as a positive reference with their housing applications.

Additional work has been done by conducting Rent Smart curriculum training for other Extension Educators in the state as well as agency representatives. In October, three of the state Rent Smart team members (Kristi Cutts, Chris Kniep and Tidemann) conducted curriculum training, with 24 agency representatives present. About half of the group works for the WI Corrections system, a growing audience for this material, as the pre-release program required of inmates has a housing component. Evaluation follow-up with previous curriculum training participants was completed at the end of 2011. The comprehensive evaluation was conducted with an evaluation specialist conducting phone interviews. Sixty-five (65) interviews were conducted from the list of 122 training participants. Forty (40), 62%, reported having used “Rent Smart” and

25 (38%) reported having not. Of those using "Rent Smart," 18 were UW-Extension colleagues and 22 worked for other agencies and organizations.

Recently the state UWEX Rent Smart team, which Tidemann serves on, was honored with the NEAFCS national housing education award in Columbus, Ohio. Our Showcase of Excellence has generated additional interest in the program and the state Rent Smart team of four UW-Extension Family Living Educators is gearing up to develop a comparable Landlord Education program, as that has been identified as a need by partners serving on housing coalitions.

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