



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – April 2016

WNEP is meeting the needs of the growing senior population.

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UW-Extension Begins Reorganization Process for Cooperative Extension

Proposed changes follow cuts in state funding to the UW System

Cooperative Extension, a division of University of Wisconsin-Extension, has begun planning for a reorganization that will sharpen its focus on education, streamline administration, and meet state budget cut mandates.

During March, UW-Extension leaders charged an 11-member steering committee for the project, dubbed *nEXT Generation*. The committee has since approved a planning framework and begun to establish focus areas for 20 or more work groups.

Cooperative Extension staff, with offices in all 72 Wisconsin counties and three tribal nations, provide education and service programs focused on agriculture, natural resources, community and economic development, family living and youth development. County governments provide at least 40 percent of funding for local Cooperative Extension staff, as well as clerical, supplies, internet and travel support.

Planning the reorganization may take four to eight months starting in May, followed by implementation. UW-Extension leaders ask county partners to consider keeping budget and facility plans stable for 2017.

“We’re going to take the time to do this right, and that means working with county partners,” said Richard M. Klemme, dean and director of Cooperative Extension. “In time, we expect some changes in staffing, but nothing that should cause counties to rethink their plans for 2016 and into 2017.”

UW-Extension Chancellor Cathy Sandeen announced priorities for Cooperative Extension reorganization on [Feb. 10](#). The reorganization follows a \$3.6 million annual cut in state funding (part of a \$250 million overall cut to the UW System’s biennial budget).

Proposed changes draw on recommendations developed last fall and on extensive feedback from county and tribal leaders, agricultural commodity groups and others with a stake in Cooperative Extension’s future. Changes include:

- Keeping a Cooperative Extension office in every county while establishing multi-county areas that consolidate administration.
- Structuring county and area jobs to let educators and researchers focus on education and research rather than administrative tasks.
- Respecting different levels of county investment, ensuring that each county receives services proportionate to its funding.

The Feb. 10 announcements finalized multi-county areas while setting aside sample county and area staffing models suggested in the original recommendations. Sandeen has asked project leaders to customize county and area staffing models to reflect real local needs and investments.

Next steps include seeking additional ideas and input from county and tribal leaders, commodities groups and other stakeholders, some of whom will take part in planning work groups.

“County leaders and Wisconsin residents have told me that they didn’t realize how a cut to the UW System would trickle down and affect them so directly,” said Sandeen in her Feb. 10 announcement.

“This process has made it clear that the state of Wisconsin depends on Cooperative Extension, and the people of Wisconsin see tremendous value in our work.” UW Extension stakeholders and constituents may submit questions, concerns to the following: Lin Larson at lin.larson@uwex.uwc.edu or 319-325-1586.

Meeting the Needs of the Growing Senior Population

According to census information, 15% of Fond du Lac residents are 65 years and older. By 2035, that number is expected to grow to 23.4%. Meeting the needs of the growing senior population is a program focus for the Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP). Programming is currently offered at Riverview Apartments and Portland Square Apartments in Fond du Lac County. Classes begin in May at Mabess Manor in Campbellsport, a new partner to WNEP. The series “Nutrition for the Young at Heart” or “Eat Smart, Live Strong” has been offered, each 6 sessions and 1 hour in length. The lessons are focused on the specific needs of the senior population, including healthy eating on a budget, healthy snacking, low-sodium foods, and cooking for one. The lessons also take into account the diminished taste, smell, appetite, and energy needs of the senior population and incorporate only appropriate physical activity.

Certified Master Gardener Volunteers

Spring has sprung, and gardens are growing. If you have questions about flowers, trees, fruits, vegetables, or insects, contact the Master Gardener Volunteer Horticulture Help Line via email at master.gardener@uwex.edu or call 920/929-3171 from 8:00 am - 4:30 pm Monday through Friday. On Saturdays, you can hear Master Gardener Volunteers on the 1450 AM KFIZ radio program “Landscape Smart” with more gardening tips and discussion from 8 am – 9 am.

Becoming a Certified Master Gardener Volunteer with UW Extension is something special. These gardeners have participated in the 13-week Level One training program and achieved at least a 70% score on the final exam. They also volunteer at least 24 hours per year (usually many more) to share what they’ve learned. Master Gardener Volunteers maintain their knowledge by participating in at least ten hours per year of educational programs on topics such as therapy gardens, herbs, shrubs, and plant diseases.

Master Gardener Volunteers are not only people who love to garden, they dedicate themselves to teaching others. In Fond du Lac County, they teach elementary students at Riverside, Parkside, Pier, Rosenow, and Sabish Middle School. They are preparing Veteran’s Park in downtown Fond du Lac for the Memorial Day parade. They can be found in the Columbus Park Butterfly Garden in Campbellsport, the Sisson Peony Garden in Rosendale, the Free Spirit Riders Sensory Garden in the Town of Empire, and Waupun Community Gardens. They adapt methods to incorporate students with disabilities and inmates into the activities.

The Master Gardener program is sanctioned by the Land Grant institutions in each state, and has been sponsored by the University of Wisconsin – Extension since 1970. There are currently 65 Certified Master Gardener Volunteers in Fond du Lac County and 2844 in Wisconsin. To learn more, visit <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu/hort/mg> or contact UW-Extension at 920/929-3171.

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