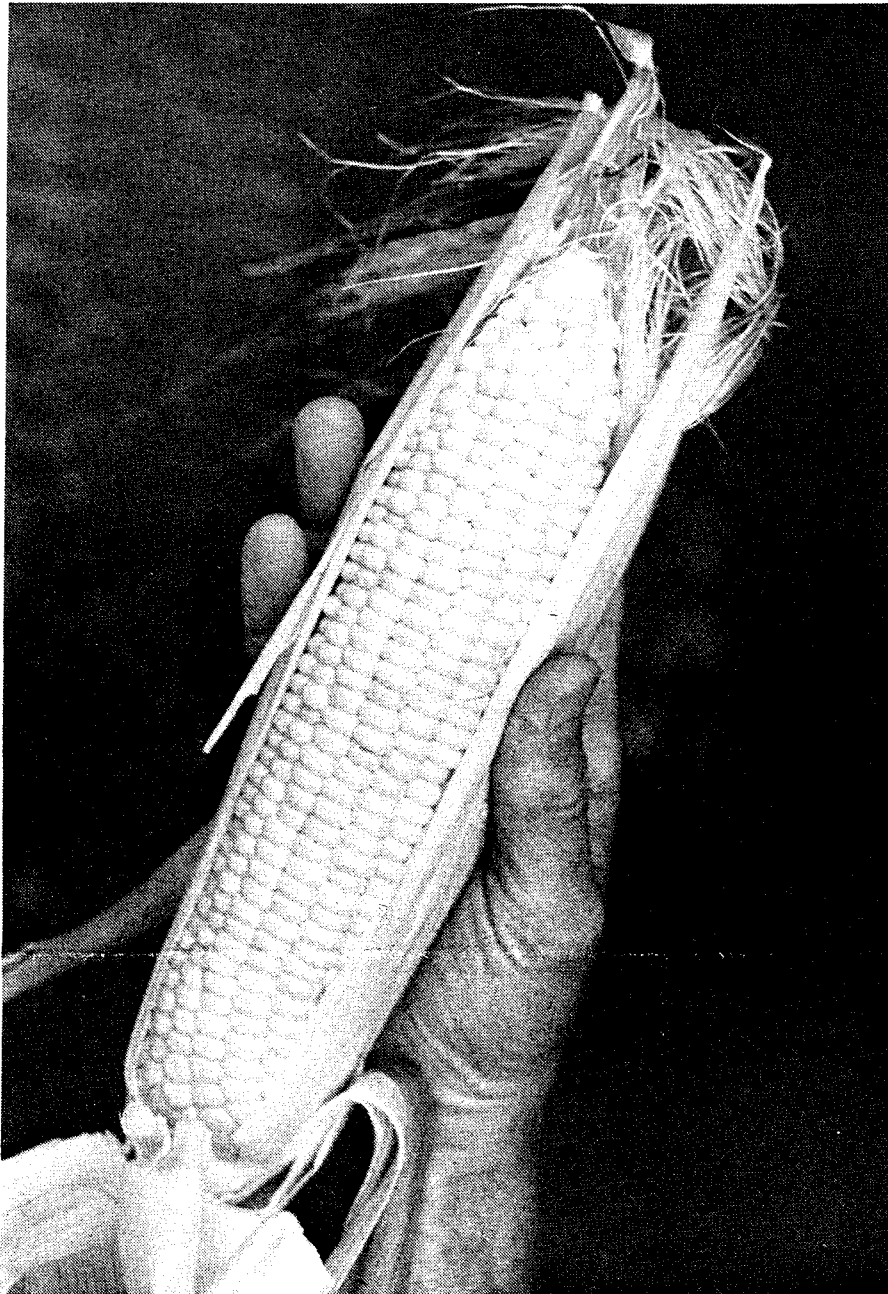


EXTENOVATIONS

October 1985

Volume 6, Number 5

Sherburne's sweet harvest sent south



Corn marketed as fresh must grade U.S. Fancy. This means the cob must be filled to the tip and be free of insect and bird damage. All corn grown for this project made this grade.

Fresh Minnesota corn on the cob. It's bursting with flavor and so sweet you hardly need to put butter on it. This probably sounds like corn you picked out of your backyard garden and rushed to the stove before any of the flavor vanished.

But we're not talking about home grown corn straight from the garden. This is Minnesota sweet corn bought off the supermarket shelf in places like Texas, Arkansas, Indiana and even Winnipeg.

Marketing fresh Minnesota sweet corn at these distant locations is part of a joint effort between Sherburne County extension agent Glen Ertel, innovative Sherburne County farmers and the harvesting and marketing expertise of Woerner Produce Co. of Elberta, Alabama.

Glen Ertel knew Sherburne County farmers could grow good sweet corn and felt that there could be a market for the fresh product. He approached Woerner Produce, a family owned farming and marketing company, with the idea. Woerner had been buying potatoes from Sherburne County farmers for several years and knew the high quality product they could produce. They were receptive to the idea so Ertel set up a meeting with interested farmers and representatives from Woerner Produce. As a result, 11 farmers agreed to try it on irrigated fields ranging from 15 to 150 acres.

According to Ertel, several key ingredients make this unique project successful. "First, sweet corn is an excellent crop to raise in rotation with potatoes, which is a major irrigated crop in the county. Second, some new, higher sugar sweet corn varieties are available that hold their flavor in storage much better than ordinary varieties. These supersweet varieties are 150 to 200 percent sugar

compared to regular sweet corn, which is rated at 100 percent sugar. After three or four days of refrigerated storage, supersweet tastes about as good as fresh picked regular sweet corn. A third factor is the ability of the Sherburne County farmers to raise a bumper crop. The final ingredient is the ability of Woerner Produce to harvest, hydrocool and transport the product to distant markets."

Ertel worked with local growers on problems of variety selection, soil fertility and irrigation. The computer link between Ertel's office and the weather data available through the Agricultural Extension Service on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus provided daily updates on growing conditions so the crop could be carefully monitored. The farmers also contracted with retired extension specialist Curt Klint to help growers with specific problems.

Once the corn is mature, Woerner Produce takes over. They contract with a Florida firm for hand harvesting the crop. A machine called a mule train moves slowly across the field. In front, men walk along hand-pulling the corn and laying it on the cross arms of the mule train. Women standing on the cross arms pack the corn into 50-ear crates. The crates are then loaded onto a flat bed truck that is pulled behind the mule train. When the truck is loaded, it heads to a nearby farm and to a device known as a hydrocooler.

Eddie Woerner of Woerner Produce designed the hydrocooler. It's a mobile, fast cooling device that's mounted on two semitrailers. One trailer is the refrigeration unit and the other houses a slow moving conveyor and a sprayer. Pallets of freshly picked corn are placed on the conveyor. As the corn moves through the cooler, 36 degree Fahrenheit water

CORN continued on page 2

McKnight gives lift to northeast

A quarter-million dollar McKnight Foundation grant was awarded jointly to St. Louis County extension and the St. Louis County Land Investment Department in June to provide employment and on-the-job training for youths in economically depressed northeastern Minnesota.

The grant provides temporary job funding for persons between the ages

of 18 and 23 who are unemployed, have had trouble finding a job or who come from limited-income families, according to St. Louis County Acting Extension Director Gene Bromenshenkel. Of the 60 three-month to year-long positions created by the program, 10 are in St. Louis County extension offices in Duluth and Virginia. Persons filling those positions will perform a variety of services in-

cluding developing 4-H clubs, publicity and leader resources and expanding camp participation; assisting in ongoing home economics programs; working with horticultural programs emphasizing fruit and vegetable production; updating filing procedures and developing the office's public information/public relations plan.

The purpose of the program is to

"provide work experience for a not very employable group so they will be more employable in the region," says Bromenshenkel. He credited Tom Tjepkema, jobs program developer at the land investment department, with developing the proposal.

The McKnight Foundation, a Minneapolis-based family foundation provides funding for human services-related programs in Minnesota.

—Mary Hoff

Agents bolster impact of PBS series

Extension agents throughout Minnesota are assisting with local task forces and other outreach efforts for Minnesota Public Television's 10-week series called "SURVIVE." The half-hour programs, which began airing in September, look at the impact of our changing economy on Minnesotans. Some of the topics are the crisis in our rural communities, use of

debt and credit, hunger and nutrition, job loss and youth unemployment.

Home economics agents, along with representatives of community education departments, local libraries and the state information and referral alliance, are working to encourage community discussion of the topics presented in the TV series. Many also head community task

forces on the problems addressed and will tie some of their local educational efforts to relevant SURVIVE issues, according to Rose Allen, assistant director of Project SURVIVE.

Home economics also joined with the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation and their Mutual Help Resource Center to gather data on mutual help

groups throughout the state, which will be included in a statewide computer directory.

The PBS television stations airing the "SURVIVE" series are KTCA, Minneapolis-St. Paul; KWCM, Appleton; KSMQ, Austin; KAWA, Bemidji; WDSE, Duluth; KFME, Fargo; and KGFE, Grand Forks.

—DeeDee Nagy

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Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota

CORN

continued from page 1

Photos by Don Breneman



The mule train, a machine brought in from Florida to aid hand harvesting of sweet corn, moves slowly through a Sherburne County corn field. Migrants from Florida and Haiti hand pick and crate the corn in the field.

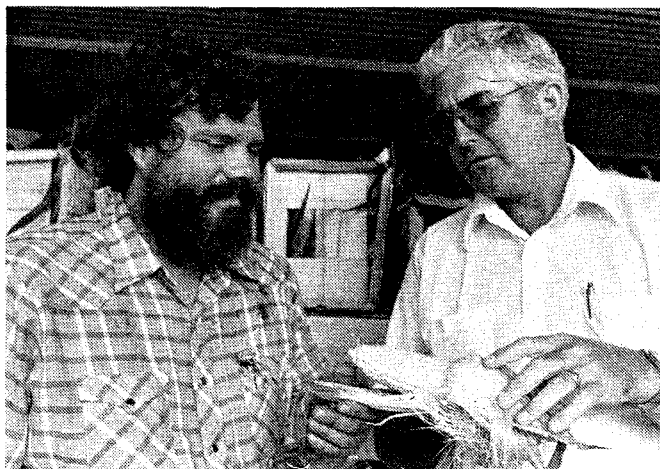
sprays over the corn, chilling the cob to 46 degrees by the time it reaches the end of the conveyor. The corn is then



Women are paid by the crate. Each marks her crate with a number code. As the crates are moved to the truck, the crate number is called out and recorded by the woman holding the tally sheet.



Pallets of freshly picked corn are loaded into the hydrocooler, a portable, quick-chilling device designed by Woerner Produce. As the corn slowly moves through the machine it is sprayed with 36 degree F water. By the time it reaches the other end of the machine the center of the cob has been chilled to 46 degrees. The corn is then loaded into a refrigerated truck, iced and shipped to a distant city.



Eddie Woerner of Woerner Produce and Glen Ertel, Sherburne County agent, discuss the quality of the sweet corn. Woerner Produce is a family-owned, farming and marketing company based in Elberta, Alabama.

loaded in a refrigerated semitrailer and topped with crushed ice. As the corn travels to market in a distant city, the trailer is kept at 36 degrees so the ice slowly melts. This melting constantly bathes the corn in ice water. Two days later, the corn is on the shelves of a distant supermarket and it's as good or better than the locally grown product.

Why ship Minnesota corn to the South? Can't they raise it easier down there? To these questions, Woerner says, "Minnesota corn fits into our marketing plan because in the South, we're between seasons. Southern farmers plant an early crop that is past maturity—and the fall crop is not ready yet. Minnesota corn lets us keep corn on the shelves all summer long." Woerner is very pleased with the quality of the product. "All the corn was graded U.S. Fancy, which is exactly what we want." Woerner is also very pleased with the yield. "We consider 300 crates per acre to be excellent. Here we will harvest 206,000 crates off 590 acres or approximately 350 crates per acre. That's fantastic."

Ertel says, "I've always maintained that we can grow nearly anything on the irrigated land of Sherburne County if we could find a market. The key ingredient here was establishing the marketing structure before we planted the crop."

The sweet corn harvest this year will generate over a million dollars of outside income for Sherburne County.

—Don Breneman

Extenovations

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The University of Minnesota, including the Agricultural Extension Service, is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, religion, color, sex, national origin, handicap, age, or veteran status.

Youth year holds travel for adults

This year is called the International Youth Year by the United Nations and thanks in part to the president's Youth Exchange Initiative, 1985 really is filling expectations.

In proclaiming 1985 as International Youth Year, President Reagan said:

"I urge American youth to reflect on our precious freedoms, to exchange ideas among themselves and with young people around the world, and to join with others in efforts to increase mutual understanding, enhance the observance of human rights and promote world peace. In short, I urge our youth to be what they have been for many generations: America's proudest ambassadors of goodwill and our national values."

Most years, Minnesota 4-H coordinates a youth exchange with Japan and Norway, but not much is available for other countries. This year's offerings, however, have included Trinidad-Tobago, Costa Rica, Thailand, the Philippines, Botswana, Zambia, Kenya, China and much of Europe.

Though many of the international youth opportunities are directed toward young people, county agents and adult leaders often have the opportunity to accompany the youth as adult advisors. Mary Preisler, a club leader from Mahnomen County, spent a month in Japan. She served as the reference point for eleven Minnesota teenage travelers who are staying in homes throughout Japan during the summer.

Other extension people who have recently served as adult advisors include county agents Carol Skelly,



Connie Simonson and Lucia Moberaten. "Language isn't a big problem, since the children in many countries are required to learn English in school," says Moberaten, Stearns County 4-H agent, of her Norway experience. "It was a wonderful way to work with 4-H'ers. And, staying in a home with a large family as I did, is a much better way to learn about a culture than as a tourist."

Many adults find travel opportunities through Professional Rural Youth Leader Exchange (PRYLE) programs. PRYLE provides for exchanges between the U.S. and other participating countries. Cindy Bigger, Otter Tail County 4-H agent, traveled to Jamaica where she consulted with the Jamaican national 4-H officers to broaden the curriculum. Liz

Templin, Washington County 4-H agent journeyed to the Caribbean for a similar professional development stay.

In another PRYLE exchange, Yvette Mason visited Minnesota as part of a Kellogg-funded inservice tour of several states. Mason is a home economics officer from Kingston, Jamaica and was studying how health and nutrition systems in the U.S. can be adapted to Jamaica where 90 to 94 percent of 4-H clubs are school-based. Because parental involvement is lacking in the school clubs, little of the health and nutrition information reaches the home.

Host family or "home stay" opportunities are available for the less adventurous. This year between July 25 and August 18, folks in 35 Minnesota counties hosted 65 Japanese children in their homes. In early spring each year, Dave Pace seeks families who would like to host students from Norway and Japan.

Other opportunities for adults include international extension 4-H travel seminars offered during fall and winter and allow extension staff and volunteer leaders to study and observe youth development in other countries. These trips cost about \$2,000 and are arranged by the National 4-H Council. Europe is the most popular destination, according to Pace.

He adds that more than 100,000 4-H members nationwide are involved annually in some 4-H international activity and that opportunities for adults are also numerous. "Numbers that large do much to underscore the 4-H commitment to International Youth Year," he concludes.

—Henri Drews

Hmong gain farm ownership

Ownership of farming and processing equipment was transferred from the Minnesota Agricultural Enterprise for New Americans (MAENA) to the Hmong Farming Cooperative in late June.

A ceremony and thank-you dinner were conducted by the Hmong Farming Cooperative Board of Directors at the Dakota County farm site. Dean and Director Borich was given a plaque thanking the Agricultural Extension Service for the MAENA project on behalf of the Hmong community.

The Hmong farming cooperative members, composed of MAENA project graduates, farmed 60 acres on their own this season in Farmington, Minnesota.

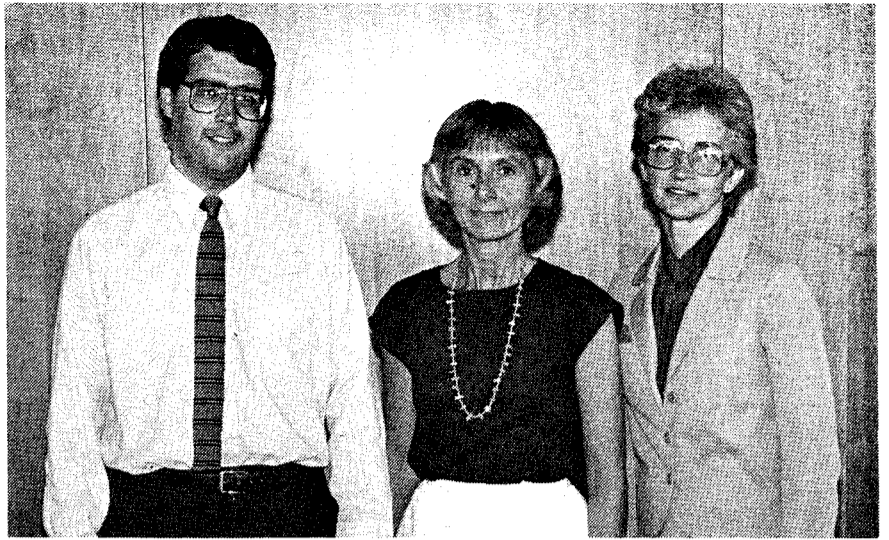
—Tom Reis

In brief . . .

Bill Larson, head of Soil Science, received the Hugh Hammond Bennett Award in August from the Soils Conservation Society of America. The award, named after the "father of soil conservation" in the United States and founder of the SCSA, is given to one individual annually to recognize distinguished service and international accomplishments in land and water resource conservation. It is the society's most prestigious award.

Lisa Behnken, Becker County, is saving two weeks of mail time with the county computer system. Working with the local Midwest Breeder in-seminator to run dairy rations, Behnken uses the university's ration balancer program, while she collects the information needed.

Two Northwest District volunteers, **Ida Paulson**, Becker County, and **Anita Cardinal**, Pennington County, received \$300 scholarships to represent Minnesota in the National 4-H House Leader Forum in Washington, D.C., in October.



The Agricultural Extension Service's Home Economics Advisory Committee met recently and elected officers for the upcoming year. Heading the group for 1985-86 will be, from left, Mark Lofthus, chair elect from Marshall; Jan Molline, incoming chair from St. Peter; and Lee Luebke, outgoing chair from Winona. (Photo by Gary Grindle)

Teen distress prompts cooperative action

"The girl lost her father in a truck accident. The older brother and father didn't have a good relationship. Brother blamed himself for father's death and attempted . . . suicide. He is receiving treatment Girl feels alone and lost."

"We live in a very low-income area so there's not much to do after school. This boy comes from an alcohol and drug dependent family so he is chemically involved. I try to build his self concept and find alternative ways for him to entertain himself without chemicals."

These are among the cases and concerns that helping professionals—social workers, teachers, clergy, 4-H agents and volunteers and others—brought to a May conference in Moorhead called "Teens in Distress: Teen Depression and Suicide." This

unique program, which kicked off a series of such meetings continuing this fall, was a cooperative effort of extension home economics, 4-H and the Office of Special Programs, according to Joanne Parsons, conference coordinator.

Parsons credits Clay County agents Nancy Frosaker and Sharon Query for proposing the Moorhead conference, which drew more than 300 participants. Their work with local schools, churches and youth organizations made them aware of a sharp rise in the incidence of youth depression. Tapping Project Support funds, they worked with local experts and extension specialists Ron Pitzer and Joyce Walker and DPL Dick Byrne to set up the day-long conference. Participants heard speakers on teen depression, suicide, drug problems,

eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and family communication.

Because of the success of the Moorhead effort, similar conferences are planned for Bemidji, Marshall, Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester. A follow-up conference is tentatively scheduled for next spring in the Twin Cities to provide further information to participants of the regional conferences. Parsons emphasizes that each conference is being planned by local agents working with resource people in their communities for guidance on conference content and speakers.

The Marshall conference, scheduled for Nov. 8, was a particularly ambitious planning effort, according to Parsons. Conference planners there conducted research to learn how area youth were responding to stress. Southwest District 4-H agents col-

lected data from 2,500 students in local schools. They worked with Southwest State University faculty and the University of Minnesota's Adolescent Psychiatry Department to draft the questionnaire and interpret the results. The Marshall conference will feature a report on the research results and each participating school will receive a profile of findings about its students. Research on teenage stress, depression and suicide risk is also being planned for the Rochester and St. Cloud areas, according to Parsons.

She praises agents', DPLs' and specialists' cooperation and skillful networking for the success of the Moorhead effort as well as the anticipated large turnouts for the coming conferences. Without that, she says, such ambitious, integrated programs might never come about.

—DeeDee Nagy

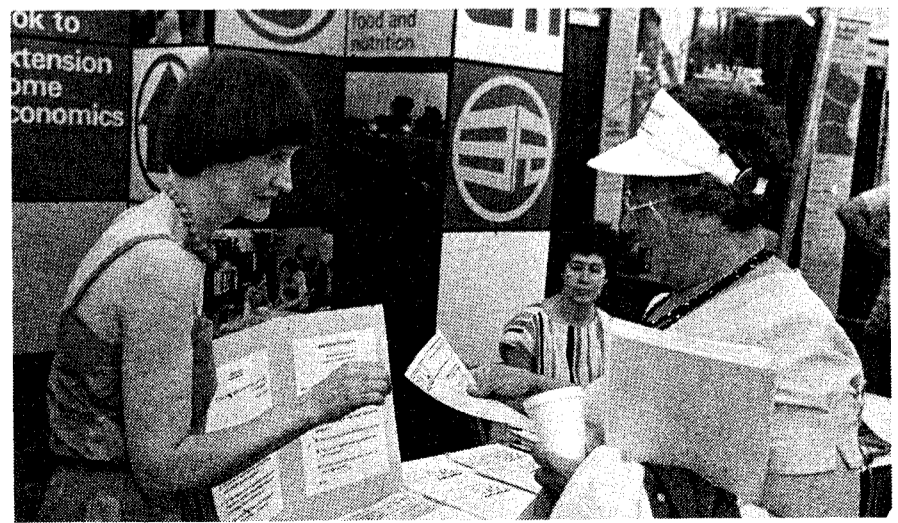
Farmfest



Floyd Bellin, Martin County extension agent, explains the benefits of FINPACK to an Isanti County farmer at the extension exhibit at Farmfest 85.



Kevin Klair, Blue Earth County agent, and Floyd Bellin, Martin County agent, explain the FINPACK program to the Alan Pelzer family of Estherville, Iowa. The computer demonstration was part of extension's exhibit at Farmfest 85.



Pauline Nickel, Watonwan County agent, hands out some material to Mrs. Laurence Ruhland of St. James at the extension Farmfest 85 exhibit.

EFNEP gets top billing

Thanks to Linda Bradley, St. Louis County home economics agent, people on the road in Duluth, Hibbing and Virginia encountered a billboard proclaiming "Good Nutrition Doesn't Have to Be Expensive." Five such billboards, which were created with the assistance of Skoglund Communications, Inc. and volunteer Ellen Harkey, were placed in areas served by the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) beginning in April. Before the last one was removed in August, thousands of northeastern Minnesotans had been exposed to the message.

"We had a lot of verbal feedback," says Bradley. "People were seeing them; they were in good spots. My gut feeling is that our objectives were met."

The billboards represent just one of several unconventional delivery methods Bradley is piloting using extension innovative grant funds. The common theme is taking extension's program to people, rather than waiting for people to come to extension.

"We want to increase the visibility of the University of Minnesota extension as a nutrition resource, and also reach people where they're at," Bradley says, adding that to do that, "you can't keep using the same old methods."

As another part of this effort, "Cholesterol: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," a videotaped leader

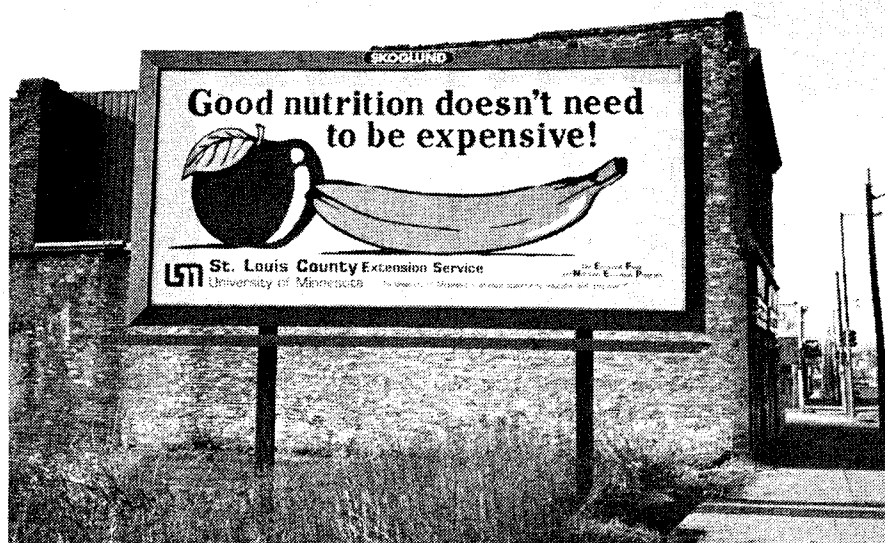
training program, was aired in northeastern Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin, Michigan and Canada last January. By providing the training over television, Bradley figures she's been able to reach a much larger audience with a better message than if she had used the conventional method of traveling around the region making presentations to small groups.

Some 275 nutrition leaders in the community at large, as well as within extension participated in the training. Program evaluations suggest that many have since shared the information with others or have themselves changed their diets and lifestyles as a result of the program.

Bradley says she got the inspiration for the TV delivery as she watched attendance at regular training sessions dwindle. People were just getting too busy to travel to such programs, it seemed—and she knew that winter weather and roads would only make things worse.

"It was time to try new methods, and time to try to make our efforts go further," she says. "We want to get programming to them where they're at."

Besides increasing participation, Bradley notes that the taped sessions allowed her to use resource people who would not have been available to travel around the region to individual sessions. And it was time and cost efficient too. "For us as an organization,



Motorists in the Duluth area get the EFNEP nutrition message on billboards, an innovative way to deliver extension information and gain visibility for the St. Louis County EFNEP program headed by home economics agent Linda Bradley.

it's a lot less (expensive) than me traveling all over and giving it a number of different times," she points out. Thanks to the success of the pilot project, another TV training session, this one on weight control, will be taped this fall.

A third effort under the innovative grant, a series of nutrition-related posters to be put into businesses in the Duluth area, is now underway, and plans are to eventually provide similar posters in city buses as well.

Bradley hopes to see efforts to reach extension's audiences "where

they are" increase in the future. Meanwhile, she is grateful for the opportunity presented through the innovative grants program.

"The innovative grant money was extremely useful to try out some things we haven't done before," she concludes. "We would not have been able to do any of this without it."

—Mary Hoff

Tabloids focus county news efforts

Thinking about how to manage new delivery methods—new ways of communicating extension's educational messages? Some counties are cutting that swath by combining several newsletters and mailing them as one tabloid-size newsletter on newsprint.

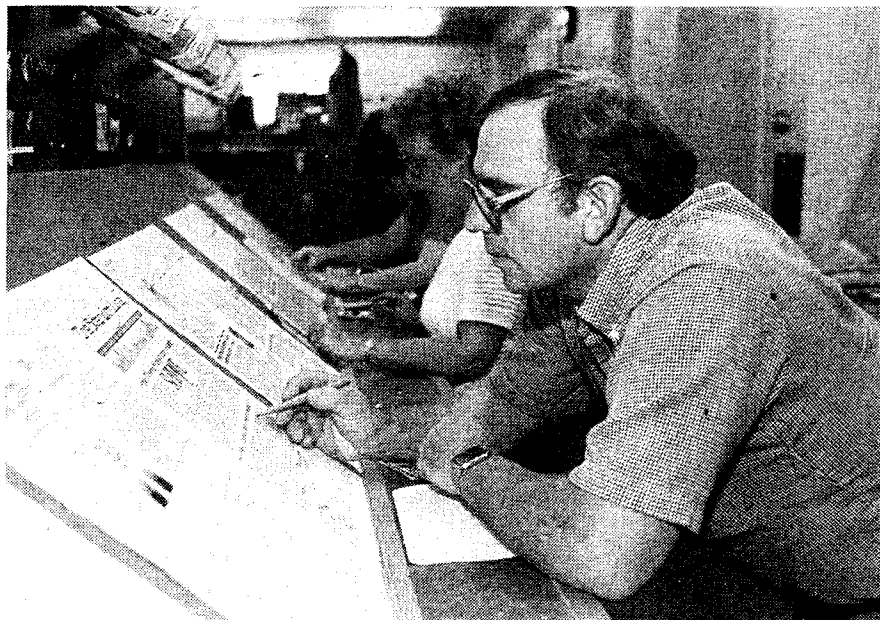
Saving postage costs is a large reason for the changing formats: when penalty mail went out, new ideas came in.

Lee Raeth in Carlton County likes the new method. Of Carlton's *Extension Monthly Reminder*, he says, "You can see what is going on in the total extension program, rather than in bits and pieces." It should be easier for families to synchronize their calendars and it's even helped agents' awareness of each others' programs.

Each county office is unique, so no two offices handle this venture exactly alike. Sometimes the county office individually contracts with a newspaper or job printer. Other times extension teams up with area agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, Soil and Water Conservation Districts and Farmers Home Administration to share costs.

West central Minnesota's *Farm Tab* is an example of the latter with three extension offices participating: Wadena, Todd and East Otter Tail. The *Pioneer Journal* in Wadena publishes it and sells advertising to support it. Denzil Cooper in East Otter Tail says, "We hope it will replace our newsletters, but we are having a little problem with delivery reaching cities in the area. We have to make a decision this fall on how to include all our mailing lists." Delivery is to rural boxholders in a 100-mile north-south area stretching from Long Prairie nearly to Park Rapids in a 50-mile width. East Otter Tail's county office started by contributing \$20 a month to the postage charges.

Most counties continue writing



Warren Sifferath, extension director for Dakota County, and Georgie Juenke of the Dakota County Extension Office work with Marylys Harris of the Northfield News to lay out the latest edition of *The Extension Line*, the Dakota County extension newspaper.

agent columns for local newspapers and providing news releases to them generated from Communication Resources while trying not to duplicate the information already going out in the combined newsletters.

Sam Bigger in West Polk thinks the idea of combining newsletters into one publication came from a national agents meeting in Ithaca, New York a few years ago. The *West Polk County Messenger* is published by the *Red River Scene* at Crookston and is supported by ads. Other agencies participate. "We generate copy on the computer and keep a hard copy of what we send." Stories are prioritized (numbered 1, 2, 3 in order of what must go in that issue) and sent in all during the month so the newspaper can keep its compositors busy. Bigger said in a letter to his county committee: "We are committed to a one-year contract. At the end of one year we will decide if we should continue this

effort."

The new formats appear to be saving dollars (certainly postage dollars) and secretarial time ordinarily spent on many newsletters. Increased circulation (to boxholders in many instances) should mean more visibility. Stress? Yes. Most are quick to admit that meeting printing deadlines has its stressful moments for someone in the office.

In Clay County, Sharon Query at Moorhead says it takes the clientele "some getting used to" the change from getting a newsletter in an envelope. Their *Clay Courier* (no ads and just extension news) is printed on yellow newsprint so that it won't be confused with shoppers in the area which are printed on green. Gordon Shafer says, "It was about three months before everyone realized what it was—they get so many publications with farm editions." The *County Line* he speaks of in Becker

County is an insert in the *Detroit Lakes Tribune* and there is news from other agencies. "Our deadline is the 15th of each month and it seems as if it comes every 15 days." Shafer says they are paying \$500 a year for it and figures that eliminating the need to mail it is saving about \$300 a year.

Carlton County's *Extension Monthly Reminder* reaches some 1,600 families and Jane Filipiak does the coordinating. The top story in each issue rotates among the program areas, but it is always the most important coming event. County fair is the headliner one month during summer in all counties having combined newsletters.

Dakota County's *The Extension Line* is printed in Northfield by the *Northfield News* (low bidder). Says Warren Sifferath, "People have learned to read it very carefully, they know they aren't going to get a post-card reminder on what's happening." The front page is planned at a staff meeting—pictures and all. One of the five county agents is assigned as editor a month in advance. It's the person whose schedule permits doing it most easily that month—the same person may be doing it two or three times a year. User fees from 4-H and home study groups help support the publishing. "If we ever went to advertising we would hire it done," he says, adding that "collecting the \$3 subscription rate is a hassle." But while five separate newsletters used to cost \$7,992 a year, the combined newsletter costs only \$3,744.

For those counties on the brink of a decision, he gladly shares his cost study which includes a production timetable and a reader survey.

Sifferath also has these encouraging observations: "It's not as hard as you think; we're better writers than we thought, but don't start unless you have strict timelines on writing and going to print."

—Mary Kay O'Hearn