

EXTENOVATIONS

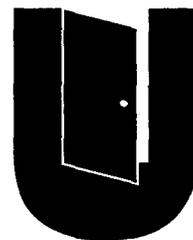
For All of Extension

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE

Vol. 16, No. 1, March 1995

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

WABASHA IS PILOT COUNTY FOR U RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL



T

ry Wabasha County if you want to see examples of the “reinvent- ed” Minnesota Extension Service (MES) at work. The University of Minnesota Rural Development Council and the Wabasha County Community Development Corp. have completed the first year of a three-year partnership to focus on strategic planning, agricultural development and tourism.

“The key to our county’s success in development will be the partnerships created between the public and private sectors,” says Don Koverman, Plainview City Administrator. “This three-year partnership illustrates the University of Minnesota’s commitment to rural communities.”

University of Minnesota President Nils Hasselmo started the Rural Development Council to provide stronger leadership in rural development by linking university resources with rural development initiatives around the state.

A partnership task force of the Rural Development Council and Wabasha County Community Development Corp. is coordinating the three-year effort.

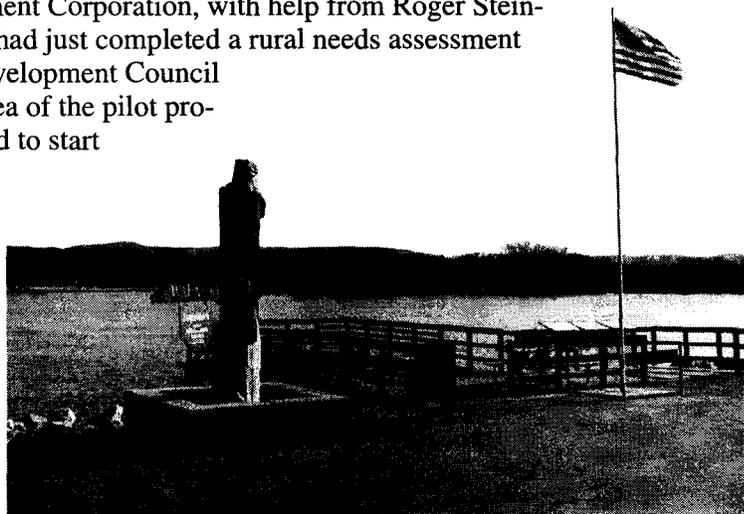
G. Edward Schuh, Rural Development Council Chair and dean of the university’s Humphrey Institute, says the partnership is using a more holistic development approach, focusing on a broad community development strategy rather than just an economic one.

The Wabasha County Development Corporation, with help from Roger Steinberg from the MES Southeast District, had just completed a rural needs assessment in Wabasha County when the Rural Development Council was starting its work. This led to the idea of the pilot project in Wabasha County that can be used to start future arrangements with other rural areas and the university.

Here’s some of what’s been happening in Wabasha County during the past year:

- An ambitious land use planning project was completed by Kathy Grotto, an intern from the Humphrey Institute who worked closely with Toni Smith, Wabasha

continued on p.6



Wabasha’s eagle lookout provides a place for tourists to scan Lake Pepin’s shoreline for birds in flight.

DON BREEMAN

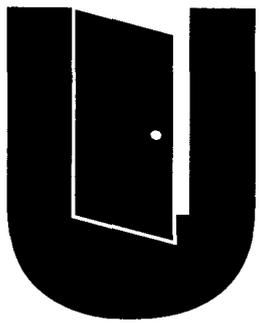
EXTENSION INNOVATIONS

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SUSTAINING YOUR RURAL COMMUNITIES

BUSINESS RETENTION, ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS WORK FOR AGRICULTURE

It would be nice if new industries offering good jobs would magically appear in rural areas that have been losing people. In real life, that's a challenge in rural areas like Murray County, Minn., which lost over 16 percent of its population from 1980 to 1990 and is located far from major trade centers.

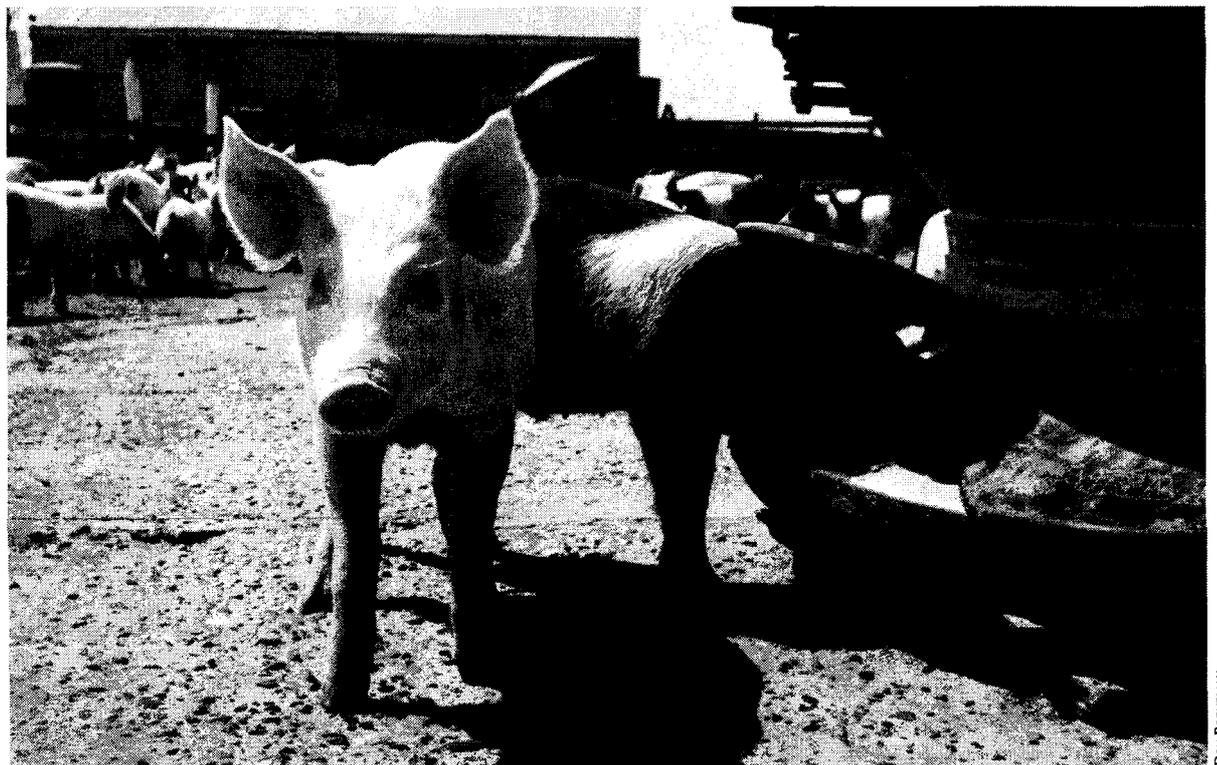
Due to the county's location, agriculture is likely to continue to be a key to its economic well-being. And to help agriculture—specifically, the swine industry—a Business Retention and Enhancement Program (BR & E) was suggested by Murray County Extension Educator Bob Koehler.

BR & E strategy programs were introduced to Minnesota by George Morse, extension economist with the University of Minnesota's Extension Service. Morse developed BR & E to help manufacturing, retail trade and tourism in small communities when he was working in Ohio. In the last year, he's modified the program for agriculture.

When Morse made the BR & E program available for agriculture, Koehler became interested in using it to involve local people in a swine industry project. Murray County's swine industry currently provides 409 jobs, which amounts to between 8 and 10 percent of the employment in the county.

But the county's swine industry hasn't grown much in the last 20 years, and Koehler says that probably means it's contributing less to farm family income than in the past. Murray County farmers presently have the lowest livestock income per crop acre in the 12 Southwest Minnesota counties that comprise Minnesota Extension Service clusters 11 and 12.

The BR & E program was made possible by 75 local community volunteers, who inter-



The Business Retention and Enhancement strategy program is helping sustain Murray County's swine industry.

viewed 84 pork producers in the spring of 1994. The data were reviewed by Morse and other specialists with the University of Minnesota. Final recommendations were developed by the local task force. At a recent community information meeting in Slayton, Koehler and BR & E task force members explained the program's four recommended strategies:

- Help pork producers find financing to fund capital investments in facilities and technologies that can improve profit potential. Over 42 percent of producers interviewed plan to expand their operations in the next five years. And of those planning to expand, 91 percent see pork production as a better opportunity than crops or other enterprises.

- Help producers earn higher incomes by learning new production and management techniques. The task force recommends facilitating participation in programs like the "Pork College," which is an intensive training session to help producers build management expertise.

- Build a community consensus for a strong swine industry and a county plan on environmental issues. Current industry trends are seen as threats by over half of the producers. The trends include concerns with the environment

and land use planning, new pork production outside the corn belt, more large operations, increasing average age of producers, competition from poultry, and changes in the packing industry.

The pork producers saw the majority of local businesses, government officials and others as positive toward the swine industry. Yet, about one-fourth of the producers felt that rural non-farm residents and city residents are negative toward the industry and nearly half saw these groups as indifferent.

- Help producers earn higher incomes through working together, or "networking."

Koehler says a local steering committee will now guide the attempted implementation of these and other recommendations adopted by the task force.

State sponsors of this BR & E project are the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development, Minnesota Extension Service and Minnesota Pork Producers. Local sponsors are the Murray County Pork Producers, Minnesota Extension Service—Murray County, and the Murray County Economic Development Office.

Jack Sperbeck

AS '93 FLOODWATERS RECEDED, COMMUNITIES EXAMINED KEYS TO THEIR ECONOMIC SURVIVAL, VITALITY

After the floodwaters of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers raged through southern Minnesota in 1993, the federal government pumped money into the area. But while the flood damaged everything in its path, some felt the money from flood/disaster assistance programs was not as evenly distributed.

Local extension educators were afraid the perceived inequity was creating a rift between farmers and small business owners. When flood grant money became available through the Minnesota Extension Service, they decided to confront the issue.

The Minnesota Extension Service research "Building Bridges" looked at this complaint but ultimately looked beyond to examine how communities, businesses and residents are economically interconnected. Through interviews, research reports, information packets, news media accounts and group presentations, the project tried to strengthen ties between sections of the community. Kathy Swift, owner and publisher of the Balaton Press-Tribune, was selected to conduct interviews with farmers and business people in her six-county local MES cluster: Lyon, Lincoln, Pipestone, Murray, Nobles and Rock counties.

Although she began her interviews with questions about flood assistance, the conversations quickly veered toward other concerns about the health of their rural communities. "We usually moved away from the flood topic right away," Swift said. "Most people said that was an act of God, something we can't control. They said that's not what's hurting our communities anyway."

Swift found that the farmers and townspeople often mentioned lack of community support and cooperation in their interviews. "People talked about 'economic jealousy.' Farmers and business people alike said that people don't like to see others get ahead even when it benefits the entire community. This attitude prevents residents from shopping locally; prevents merchants from patronizing one another; and prevents farmers from supporting one another emotionally through tough times or from organizing to work cooperatively on farm-related issues," Swift said.

Swift wrote newspaper articles based on her interviews and worked with MES educators in her area to organize public meetings to review the findings. "After the articles came out, people would call to tell me, 'It's true,' 'This is the crux of our rural problems,'" Swift said. People at the meetings would talk about how important this was, and some were almost in tears.

While Swift heard the same concerns and complaints from farmers and small business people, she also heard people say, "Some of this is our own fault and we have to change it." Meeting participants often asked if she knew how other towns managed to flourish.

"It seems that the communities with a sense of connectedness and key leaders in businesses, schools and farms survive," Swift says. "These committed, involved people affect the vitality of the town."

Kathleen Cleberg



Small towns and their surrounding rural areas are closely interdependent.

How does your community measure up?

10 Keys to Rural Community Survival

(Taken from materials prepared for community meetings as part of the MES Building Bridges program in southwestern Minnesota.)

- **Community pride** — Successful communities reflect care and attention with well kept yards, streets and parks. Community festivals and events give all residents an opportunity to celebrate their community, its history and heritage.
- **Quality in business and community life** — People in successful communities believe that something worth doing is worth doing right. Residents look to the future and businesses work together to provide services to the community.
- **Willingness to invest in the future** — Residents invest time and energy in community betterment, convinced that what they do today will have an impact on them and the succeeding generations.
- **Community decision making** — Power is shared and consensus-building is an important part of community efforts.
- **Cooperative community spirit** — The community focus is on working together toward a common goal. Opinions are welcomed and, despite disagreements, community members rise above personalities and work toward positive results.
- **Realistic appraisal of future opportunities** — Successful communities build on strengths and minimize weaknesses. They capitalize on what their area — both the town and surrounding rural regions — has to offer.
- **Active economic development program** — Successful communities have an organized, collaborative and active approach to development projects. The public and private sectors work together for the betterment of both town and rural areas.
- **Transition of power** — Young leadership is often the rule in thriving communities. In some cases, emerging leaders grew up in the area. In others, new residents are welcomed and their ideas are encouraged. Older residents also contribute and act as mentors.
- **On the cutting edge** — Thriving communities are not afraid to assess situations honestly, debate their options and take some risks. Instead of trying to bring back the past, residents work together to shape the future.
- **Value all community segments** — Successful communities take a holistic view of their vitality, realizing that all community segments are important.

FOSTERING THE SCHOOL-COMMUNITY-BUSINESS-MES PARTNERSHIP BENEFITS ALL

Sibley county in south central Minnesota is like most rural counties in our state—light manufacturing provides most of the employment, followed by jobs in agricultural and service fields. Like many of its counterparts, Sibley County suffers from a lack of skilled workers and an outmigration of young people. Can these problems be solved? Who can do it?

"These problems are too large and complex for any one individual, group or agency to solve," says Sue Engelmann, a Sibley County extension educator specializing in community resources. "We have to collaborate to make any progress."

She worked with local businesses, schools and community leaders to develop a two-year project and obtained \$33,000 in grant funds from the Southeastern Minnesota Initiative Fund. The project focused on three areas: increasing the skills of current and incoming workers through training programs, facilitating an exchange of knowledge between local schools and manufacturing firms, and providing internship and apprenticeship opportunities for young people. Working with local firms to create a "family-friendly" policy is also part of the focus.

Meet Technical Services for Electronics Inc. (TSE): founded in 1972 in Arlington, the company now employs nearly 140 people at plants in Arlington and Jackson, Minn. The company manufactures cables and cable assemblies for other companies in the computer, communications and medical fields. TSE is one of the largest employers in Sibley County and is known for producing high quality, custom products.

TSE is also known for its innovative approach to the work environment. Three years ago, TSE's manufacturing plants were like most others; the first shift arrived at 7 a.m. and the second shift started at 3 p.m. If you were late or had a doctor's appointment, the time away from the plant counted against your vacation or sick leave. Employees were leaving for higher paying jobs in the Twin Cities and it was difficult to find skilled replacements.

Although the wages were competitive, the company couldn't match the wage rates of Twin Cities firms. It decided to offer flexible work scheduling. Employees give their supervisors a weekly work schedule for approval and if something unexpected comes up, the employee is allowed to make up the time when the work load allows. If the employees want to take a Friday off, they work longer days beforehand so the work is completed on time.



Looking over one of the products manufactured by Technical Services for Electronics in its Arlington plant are Wendy ZumBerge, plant manager; Lyle Fahning, president of the company; and Sue Engelmann, extension educator, Sibley County.

"Our success depends on shipping our products on schedule," says Lyle Fahning, president of TSE. "We've turned over the decision of how that happens to our workers in the plant. Lately, we've been able to ship ahead of schedule because our employees want to finish their work early, to spend more time with their families."

TSE uses flexible work scheduling as an employee benefit that doesn't cost anything. Wendy ZumBerge manages the two production facilities: "Everyone still puts in all their hours. If we have a big job that requires overtime, we ask for volunteers." The plan requires extensive cross-training so each employee can fill a variety of roles in the production process. The company admits the idea won't work for every manufacturer.

"But it has worked very well for us and the people we employ," ZumBerge says. "Flexible work schedules give people more time with their families and has made our plants more efficient—we still employ only two shifts, but the plant is in operation 21 hours a day."

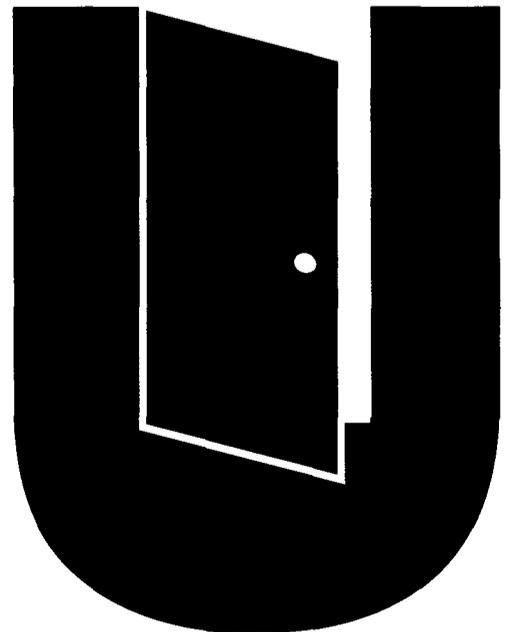
TSE has also begun an apprenticeship program for students in Sibley East High School. "We bring them into the plant," Fahning says, "and show them what it's like to work in a manufacturing plant. They learn what it's like to be evaluated on their job performance and the kind of training they'll need for future employment." TSE also uses high school students in its engineering design unit.

"I call it family-friendly work schedul-

ing," Engelmann says. "Companies that offer this are supporting a strong, healthy, family-oriented community. This will hopefully translate into fewer kids involved in crime, less need for welfare, and so on."

Engelmann's goal is to use TSE's success as an example for other businesses in Sibley County and the region. "I think TSE is demonstrating the role that the private sector can play in improving the quality of life in our communities. It's a 'win-win' situation—good economically for the company, good for the employee, and good for the community."

Martin Moen



U PREVENTING FAMILY VIOLENCE

POSITIVE PARENTING PROJECT REACHES THOUSANDS THROUGH EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY AWARENESS

In order to break the cycle of family violence, we need to help parents become more thoughtful about how they deal with their children," says Ron Pitzer, extension family sociologist. Extension's Positive Parenting project is working toward this goal through statewide educator training, parent education, community awareness-building and new educational materials.

This many-faceted project is being implemented in several ways around the state. But whether it's Goodhue County's Kids: Handle With Care project, the Living Together Peacefully metro cluster effort, or Beltrami County's Turn Off the Violence campaign, the message is still about decreasing family violence of all kinds.

Initially the project focused on training extension educators and parent educators in Eveleth, Red Wing, Fergus Falls, St. Paul and Fargo/Moorhead. Other training in 11 Minnesota communities attracted some 600 parent educators. In Goodhue County, more than 1,000 parents were surveyed on their child discipline methods and attitudes. Follow-up interviews will assess the impact of education and awareness-building now taking place.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) instructors throughout the state are using a new 75-page curriculum written by metro cluster MES educators. It provides parents with positive discipline methods as viable alternatives to physical punishment. "The Positive Parenting curriculum lets me tailor instruction to the needs of different parent groups," says Susan Hansen, ECFE instructor. "Working with extension means we get the resources we need to teach parents," she states. "This curriculum really fills the gap." In the metro area, another new curriculum specifically for child-care providers helps teach young children non-violent ways to resolve conflict.

In Ottertail, Clay, Becker, Wilkin and Goodhue counties, a range of collaborative community awareness programs have been very effective. In addition to traditional educational presentations, theatre productions, county-endorsed No Hit Days, church bulletin inserts and even refrigerator magnets are being used to send positive parenting messages home.

In the Bemidji area alone, MES educator Connie Simenson reports several community efforts. The activities include the formation

of an anti-violence task force and the development and distribution of family safety publications to 7,000 families. Educational programs for teens and a shopping bag campaign involving seniors and young children are also working to stop family violence. "The most exciting part of this project," says Simenson, "is that people in the community feel they can make a difference."

Collaborating with a range of local agencies and residents has been key to building this awareness. Typically extension is working alongside residents, social service agencies, police, parent educators, child protection personnel, clergy, public health officials and teachers. "This project is a wonderful collaborative venture externally and within MES. Extension educators all over the state have accomplished a lot of good work," states Pitzer.

Phyllis Jenks



Goodhue County's "Kids Handle With Care" program carried an anti-spanking message. MES Educator Kathleen Olson, second from left, is shown with collaborators, from left, Kathy Radmer, Red Wing Community Education; Jean Currier, Public Health Service; and Hugh Stephenson and Jean Johnson, Red Wing residents.

DAVE HANSEN

MES ENTOMOLOGIST TURNS KIDS ON TO THE INSECT WORLD

Insects have an image problem. Even the most beneficial ones too often send people scurrying for their flyswatters or cans of Raid.

But Minnesota Extension Service entomologist Jeff Hahn is out to correct that, and he's starting with thousands of elementary school children. When he takes his slide program and live insects to classrooms, the kids are — well, bug-eyed — with interest.

Hahn began visiting schools about 10 years ago and has seen requests for his presentation accompanied by live insects grow to the point where he has to turn down many requests for lack of time. In 1994 he made more than 40 school visits, usually talking with 60 - 100 children at each stop. Typically, the children have studied insects in science and are primed with good questions, Hahn says.

"Kids are interested in insects and most of the kids are eager to hold the live ones," Hahn says. "They also love looking at the collection of insects, asking questions about nearly all the specimens."

Hahn begins his presentation with a slide show on the ABCs of insects, which includes photos of common Minnesota species. Some schools request programs specifically on spiders and Hahn can tailor his talk to the class science curriculum. He brings a large case with many mounted insect specimens as well as live horn tail caterpillars or hissing cockroaches. Hahn never risks taking an insect that could be injured by handling. During the winter, he puts the insects or spiders under his



MES entomologist Jeff Hahn watches as a horn tail caterpillar crawls on a student's hand at the Heart of the Earth Survival School in Minneapolis.

coat to protect them from the cold between car and classroom.

Hahn's reputation has spread. He recently got a request to talk with children in Hibbing. Although the distance prevented him from going, he worked with St. Louis County MES Educator Bob Olen to train three Extension Master Gardeners from that area to handle that request and additional ones as they arose. In this school year they have made about 40 school visits, reaching nearly 1,000 children.

The volunteers use Hahn's slides, but, like Hahn himself, they rework each presentation to meet the needs and interests of the children and teachers. "Elementary school is such an important age for kids to begin to appreciate science. Who knows where that interest might take them some day?" Hahn says.

Deedee Nagy

YOUTH AND U CONFERENCE UPDATES 140 MES EDUCATORS

A unique staff development workshop for cluster teams and campus-based faculty brought 140 MES educators to St. Cloud in January. The two-day conference was co-sponsored by the Minnesota Association of Extension 4-H Educators (MAE4-HE) and the Center for 4-H Youth Development. It stressed participation by cluster teams with representatives from a range of specializations including many MES educators who are new to youth work.

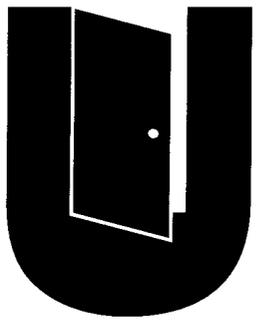
The workshop also focused on resources available through the College of Education as well as other colleges that are new partners with MES since reinvention, according to Cindy Bigger, MAE4-HE president and Benton County MES educator. Many of the workshops stressed collaboration with other youth-serving organizations and such topics as grant writing skills, evaluation, new delivery methods, youth in policy-making roles and changes within the Minnesota Department of Education that may affect the way that MES serves young people.

Among the speakers was U of M Regent Stanley Sahlstrom who praised MES's innovative and collaborative approaches to youth development work. He also assured par-

ticipants that MES work is vital to the university's mission of making research and resources available to solve local community problems.



Jessica Hendricks, MES program assistant, and Jim Deidrick, MES educator, discuss changes in youth work since the MES reinvention.



KEEPING YOUR FOOD SAFE

MES HELPS FOOD MANUFACTURERS KEEP THEIR PRODUCTS WHOLESOME, HEALTHY

The outbreak of salmonella food poisoning linked to Schwan's ice cream last fall was a timely reminder to the state's food manufacturers and processors. The incident showed that an oversight at any stage in the manufacturing process can lead to contaminated products and a public relations nightmare.

Minnesota Extension Service Food Safety Specialist Joellen Feirtag is working with the Minnesota Departments of Agriculture and Public Health to educate small food processors about potential hazards and the steps they must take to avoid them. The Schwan's incident heightened awareness of food safety and made the state's 1,000 food processors and manufacturers receptive to workshops and other training sessions on food safety, Feirtag says.

She is traveling the state meeting with food processors, teaching them how to adopt Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans that emphasize preventive measures at every step in the manufacturing and transport of foods. Within about five years, she says manufacturers will be required to have HACCP plans in effect so those who begin thinking in HACCP terms now will be at an advantage. In addition, she says they will be assured that their foods are safe and worthy of the public's confidence.

Feirtag, who has been with MES for about a year, was quick to form collaborative ties to other government agencies concerned with food safety. "The Department of Agriculture and the Department of Health have their areas of expertise, but they look to MES for curriculum and educational planning. We're able to use the extension model of



Minnesota food manufacturers and processors are learning to eliminate potential food safety hazards at each step in manufacturing and transporting.

'training the trainers' to get new information to many people, and the food industry has been enthusiastic in support of our efforts," she says.

Graduate students in the Department of Food Science and Nutrition are working with Feirtag on an industry-wide needs assessment that will guide MES's educational programming for the future. She works closely with MES food technologist Bill Schafer, who is largely responsible for consumer food safety programs, and Richard Epley, MES animal sci-

entist who works with the meat industry. "By training people who will pass that information on to many others, we can have a big influence on food safety," Feirtag says. "Ideally we want food inspectors to be educators when they work directly with grocers and restaurant owners, and we'd like veterinarians to help train farmers on basics of food safety. It's a team effort all the way."

Deedee Nagy

WABASHA COUNTY ILLUSTRATES U'S RURAL COMMITMENT *continued from page 1*

County MES Educator.

- A feasibility study of a possible bald eagle interpretative center, including designs and sketches, was completed. by Grotto and a student from the university's Department of Landscape Architecture. The university's Tourism Center and Raptor Center also were involved.

- The possibility of drawing tourists (in group tours) from Minnesota and western Wisconsin was explored. The Carlson School of Management provided technical help.

- Extension economist Bud Crewdson has completed an agricultural profile of the county as the first part of an agricultural development project.

- Agricultural and community leaders from the county spent a day on the university's St. Paul Campus talking to extension economists Dick Levins, Bill Lazarus and other faculty members. "We're breaking an old paradigm here," says Steinberg. "We're treating agriculture like other economic development issues—not separately."

Jack Sperbeck

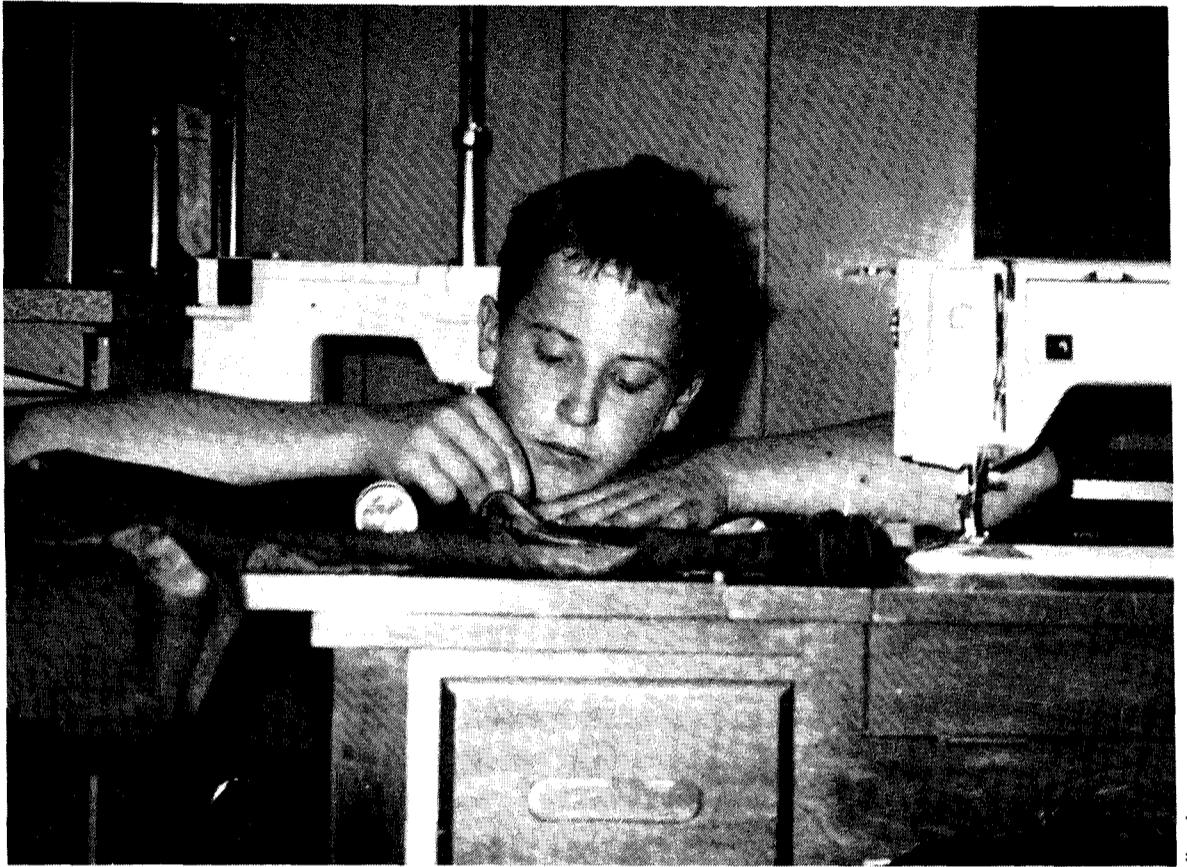
BENTON 4-H CAMP KEEPS PARTICIPANTS IN STITCHES

America's children and teens account for \$700 million in clothing purchases each year, according to Karin Ihnen, Benton County MES educator. She adds that even without the enjoyment and self-esteem that sewing can provide for young people, the investment is a reason to learn more about clothing decisions.

Each summer, Benton County's 4-H Clothing Camp brings together up to 80 youths between the ages of 5 and 18 for three days of basic sewing instruction and wardrobe tips. Ihnen and Benton County MES Educator Cindy Bigger do part of the teaching assisted by 30 adult volunteers from Benton County and the surrounding area. Last year's camp also included residents from the Foley Nursing Center who completed the projects as well. The young sewers tackle vests, decorated t-shirts, pillows and even such unique items as retrieving bags for training hunting dogs. Participants use the latest in computerized sewing machines and sergers to complete their projects.

"We're trying to have kids develop a sense of responsibility, accomplishment and self-esteem just by learning some basic skills they can use," Ihnen says. A fashion show moderated by fashion consultants Richard Moody and Alyce Flowers gave campers a chance to model their creations. The consultants talked to the campers about wardrobe selection, affordability, the fashion industry, and how to present themselves. The camp also included classes on nutrition, self-esteem and family economics. Benton County 4-H Junior Leaders helped keep camp atmosphere fun and upbeat, according to Ihnen.

Sponsorship of Clothing Camp comes from 4-H, a grant from the American Home



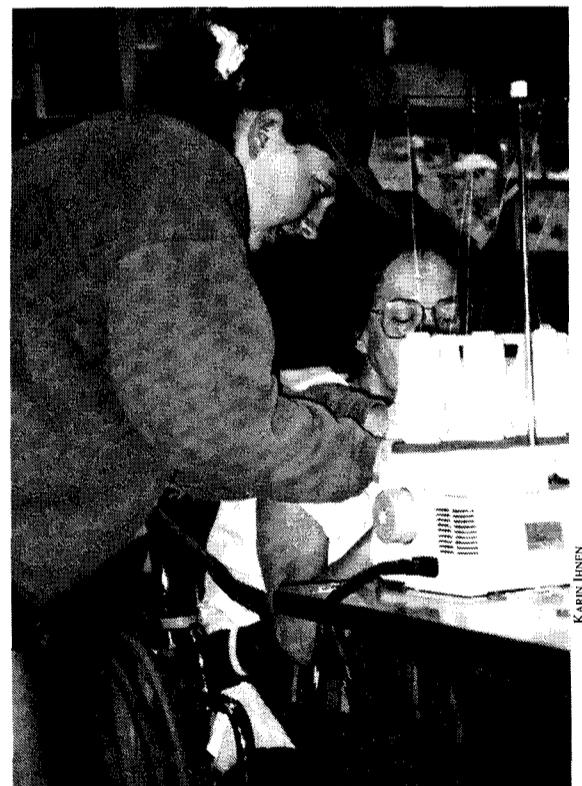
Andy Shaw was intent on his sewing project at Benton County 4-H Clothing Camp.

Sewing and Craft Association, the Foley Kiwanis and other businesses. To train other 4-H leaders, volunteers and MES educators to lead clothing camps elsewhere in the state, Ihnen and Bigger conducted leader training last summer. The 25 adult leaders who attended will carry the clothing camp idea beyond Benton County and its surrounding area this year.

Ihnen led a workshop on the clothing camp experience at the North Central Regional 4-H Leader's Forum in Milwaukee last fall and has agreed to do a similar workshop when the group meets this year in Minneapolis. The Minnesota Association of Extension 4-H Edu-

cators recognized Benton County's Clothing Camp with its top communication award for 1994.

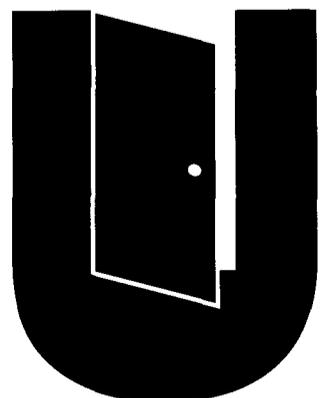
Deedee Nagy



Clothing camp participant Amie Bauerly helped fellow camper Hazel Nelson, a Foley Nursing Center resident.



Betty Winscher helped camper Joe Lieser stitch a pillow.



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