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EXTENOVATIONS

For All of Extension

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE

Vol. 16, No. 3, October 1995

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MAKING EXTENSION SUCCESSFUL



**MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
ANNUAL REPORT 1995**

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MAKING EXTENSION SUCCESSFUL IN A NEW ENVIRONMENT

A year ago at this time, I was listening to Pat Borich present his retirement announcement, and wondering, I'm sure along with the rest of you, how this next year would be. Now, looking back on what we've accomplished, I hope you're as pleased and delighted by our progress as I am. First, thanks to everyone for the wonderful support you gave me as interim dean and director. I couldn't have done it without the many people who provided excellent counsel and moral support, and who also stepped forward as leaders in your own arenas. It's a wonderful tribute to the Minnesota Extension Service that we made great progress in shared leadership at a time when we could have, understandably, chosen to sit back and wait for a new dean and director. As a result, we're in a wonderful position to welcome a new individual to the strongest, most competent, MES we've ever been. In reference to this year's annual conference theme, "We did it!"

Now, that doesn't mean we can rest on our laurels. We've made a great beginning, but we need to keep moving forward. For example, as our work gets increasingly complex, with new partners and new alliances, it gets harder to describe—yet it's increasingly important to tell about what we do that in a way that everyone understands. All around us institutions are changing, and public funding continues to come under closer scrutiny. It has never been more important for us to be accountable and to show that we are making a difference in people's lives and well being.

At the same time, we've been positioning ourselves for a long time through the reinvention. Externally, we're a major player in a variety of collaborative efforts, including a new public and private alliance with the MES civic initiative. Internally, we have new and deeper ties across campus with more collegiate units, and we're becoming much more integrated than ever before. And we're learning to be more adept at addressing the important issues facing Minnesotans. I think we're doing all the right things regarding how we function in these new, more difficult public arenas.

I don't know of any organization better equipped for educational leadership in the new century—we have talent, leadership, and commitment that I see, time and again, in people throughout this organization. Ultimately, that's where it really counts.



DON BRENEAN

Gail Skinner-West

Again, thank you all for your personal support to me in my interim role, and for your commitment to the overall organization this past year. I look back with real satisfaction and a sense of pride for 1994-95, and I look forward to welcoming a new dean and director feeling good that they present an organization moving well through reinvention and well poised to meet the opportunities awaiting us this year.

Gail Skinner-West
Interim Dean and Director
Minnesota Extension Service

Nurturing Children, Youth and Families

PARTNERS IN PARENTING PROVIDES NEW OUTLOOK ON LIFE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

“Partners in Policymaking has given me a whole new outlook on life,” says a woman with cerebral palsy who’s participating in a Southwestern Minnesota program for people with developmental disabilities.

“Before I went,” she continues, “I didn’t think I deserved a lot of things that people without disabilities have. I also was beginning to give up—like there was nothing for me anymore. Going to ‘Partners’ has changed all of these negative thoughts.

“Today, I look at myself as a worthwhile individual. I am a person and I just happen to have a disability. I believe in myself—I can do anything I want to do. I hope that Partners in Policymaking continues, as it is a fantastic experience and without this training, I would still be thinking negative thoughts.”

The Partners in Policymaking program is sponsored by the Minnesota Governor’s Council on Development Disabilities and the University of Minnesota’s Extension Service. Murray County is coordinating one of the program sites this year, with funding under the Developmental Disabilities Act of 1994.

Partners in Policymaking is an innovative leadership training program for parents of young children with disabilities and for adults with disabilities. Partners is designed to educate and empower participants to achieve systems change at all levels of government. Its main goal is to create productive partnerships between people needing services and those making policies and laws.

Thirty individuals from 19 Southwestern Minnesota counties are participating in the program, according to Karen Tommeraasen, extension educator located at Slayton, Minn. The training provides 128 hours of sequential instruction over eight weekends (one per month) at Southwest State University, Marshall. National and local experts present state-of-the-art information at each session.

Participants learn about disability issues and best practices. They become competent advocates who can influence policymakers at local, state and national levels. They’re learning to assert themselves and become politically involved, Tommeraasen says.

“Millions of dollars are being cut by Congress from programs for people with disabilities. And children with disabilities are the hardest hit,” she adds.

Partners is not about perpetuating the status quo of today’s systems. It’s about creating new possibilities for the future. For more information, contact Karen Tommeraasen at the Murray County Extension Service, P.O. Box 57, Slayton, Minn. 56172, (507) 836-6148.

Jack Sperbeck



BARBARA MUESING—SHE LOOKS AT MES FROM BOTH SIDES AND IS PLEASED WITH WHAT SHE SEES



Barbara Muesing has been both an insider and an outsider with the Minnesota Extension Service and she likes what she sees from both sides.

Currently Director of Outreach at the University of Minnesota at Crookston, a position jointly funded by MES and other agencies, she has also been an Extension Educator and District Director. So, as an insider, she knew the positive impact extension has had on children, youth and family. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant surprise to her, while serving as Executive Director of the University’s Board of Regents between extension jobs, to find extension so highly regarded. “It was amazing to find out the respect and admiration the Regents had for extension and the way it reaches everyone in the state,” she says.

While Muesing respects the past work of extension, she appreciates the ways in which it is changing. “We spend a lot more time on collaboration now. I can’t think of a thing I’ve done recently just on my own.”

She can cite many examples of extension collaborating with other partners to better the lot of the state’s youth and families. Many of these projects use high-tech delivery methods, such as interactive video and personal computers.

In one project, she worked with the University’s School of Public Health and College of Human

Ecology and the Minnesota Hospital Association to present a series of interactive video programs on wellness to teachers at a school in Plummer.

Everyone involved liked the project, including the presenters—who appreciated the challenge of adapting their teaching skills to distance learning, Muesing notes.

In a second innovative learning program, Muesing found that technology was the carrot that could bring 40 sixth-graders of both urban and rural backgrounds to Crookston for nearly a week of learning about computers, college and even cows. All students in the racially and economically diverse group had the use of personal computers and the e-mail messages flew rapidly.

The project, dubbed Youth Connecting: University On-Line, had multiple objectives, Muesing says. One major objective, promoting understanding and acceptance of differences, was easily met as the session progressed and participants became friends with other kids they might never have met on their own.

Anne Gillespie Lewis

STATEWIDE POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM TEACHES DISCIPLINE SKILLS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT

“Positive Parenting: Alternatives to Physical Punishment” is a statewide project that focuses attention on the nurturance and discipline of children. We launched this project for the same reason we do all our work: people like you told us they wanted education in this area. “Positive Parenting...” is the latest example of the high quality educational programs the Minnesota Extension Service (MES) has offered to children, youth and families for years.

The Positive Parenting materials explain what is known about physical punishment and its consequences; teach parents alternative ways to nurture and discipline their children; and attempts to influence the culture of Minnesota communities about the hitting of children.

Ron Pitzer, an extension family sociologist in the College of Human Ecology, helped lead the development of this project. He says nurturance and discipline are not separate dimensions in raising children.

“Kids want attention. Catching your child being good and rewarding desirable behavior are two ways of nurturing them and giving them what they want,” Pitzer says. “Consequently, your kids don’t have to misbehave to get your attention, and you don’t have to discipline them.”

But it isn’t that easy. Kids misbehave for a number of reasons and the Positive Parenting video and instructional materials will help parents deal with many of them.

Betty Cooke coordinates the Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program for the state Department of Education, a parent education program for all Minnesota families with children ages birth to four. She says the Positive Parenting materials are an excellent, practical resource for use with parents in this program.

“Teaching parenting skills and providing alternatives to physical punishment are very important topics in our society,” Cooke says. “This series is easy to use, based on research and geared to the everyday concerns of parents throughout the state. It will be widely used by ECFE parent educators.”

Here are other examples of how MES has nurtured children, youth and family this year:

In Hennepin County, extension educator Debra Stone is working with the Eden Women Drug Treatment Program in developing an arts-based education program. The 29 women who remained active in the project are collaborating on a manuscript titled, “Things Don’t Get Better by Chance, Things Get Better by Change.” With Stone’s assistance, the women are learning the vocational and business skills associated with getting the manuscript published.

In Swift County, extension educator Dorothy Rosemeier and nutrition education assistant Pam Malland organized an eight-week program for young parents who face social and economic challenges. By coordinating the work with the Swift County Youth Program Coalition, Rosemeier and Malland were able to offer classes on self esteem and personal care, parenting skills, family and community relationships and household management. Attendance increased during the eight-week period as word-of-mouth spread about this program.

In Southwest Minnesota, the MES Youth Issues Education Program is continuing to offer its popular “Peace Talks” training in conflict resolution and peer mediation. Forty-seven school districts have participated in the program, which has trained nearly 1,000 students, teachers, staff and administrators. Extension educator Marie Lee Rude attributes the success to willingness of the project’s partners to share resources and expertise. The part-



DOUG BRENESEMAN

ners include MES, the SW/WC Educational Cooperative Service Unit’s Violence Prevention Coordinator and Advisory Committee and the 47 school districts.

In Grant County, a collaborative program between MES and local school districts provided a part-time Peace Educator who would teach lessons and work with teachers to create a more peaceful environment. Extension educator Julie Ritter says

an elementary principal told her, “This project has significantly reduced the conflict in the hallways and the playground.” A teacher said, “I now spend far less time intervening in conflict between students. Imagine the skills kids will have after six years of peace education!”

Martin Moen

Positive Parenting

A Minnesota mother tells how she’s becoming a ‘positive parent’

Jennifer is a 32-year-old mother of four in northeast Minnesota who found the courage to admit to her extension educator that she needed help to become a better parent. As a result she’s attending a series of classes that feature the Positive Parenting curriculum developed by MES.

“As a single parent, I felt very alone and stressed as a mother,” Jennifer says. “I needed to connect with other parents and some structured learning to deal with those feelings.”

She found those things in her class. “I get a lot of support from the other moms,” Jennifer says, “and it’s a comfortable place to talk openly about your fears.” Watching the videotape that is part of the Positive Parenting curriculum was a “shocking experience” for Jennifer. “When you’re at home in the middle of a situation with your kids, you don’t think about what you’re saying and doing, you just react. To see my behavior played out on the TV was a powerful moment for me.”

Jennifer feels she is making progress. “The class has given me a structured opportunity to think about my role as a parent and plan how to improve the lives of my kids.”

While the curriculum provides a step-by-step process, its learning modules can be broken apart and combined with other material—a feature Jennifer appreciates. “One of my children has Attention Deficit Disorder Syndrome and another mother in my class has a child with the same problem. So (my extension educator) is adapting the class to include information about this. I never expected the class to be changed because of my situation, but I’m thrilled that it is!”

Jennifer has just begun her series of Positive Parenting classes and already she feels stronger and better equipped to handle the stress of being a single parent without continued outside help.

Caring for our Environment

SEPTIC MAINTENANCE PROGRAM HELPS HOMEOWNERS PROTECT THEIR INVESTMENT AND OUR WATER

The design of car engines often allows them to run for more than 200,000 miles, yet cars driven less than 100,000 miles wear out. Why? In many cases it's because the owner didn't properly care for the engine.

Ken Olson, Sherburne County Extension Educator, and Dave Gustafson, Assistant Extension Specialist for on-site sewage treatment, like to use this analogy when talking about sewage treatment systems. Without proper maintenance, sewage treatment systems can also perform poorly or fail. Unfortunately, failures are below ground and less obvious than worn-out car engines.

Septic systems that are properly designed, installed, operated and maintained protect our drinking and recreational waters from diseases and contamination. With nearly half a million households in Minnesota owning and operating septic systems, faulty systems can be a real danger.

Olson and a planning group of rural residents, septic pumpers and inspectors met in 1992 to create an education program for homeowners. They designed the Mississippi Corridor Septic System Operation and Maintenance Education Program with three main objectives:

- To help rural residents understand the basic operation of a private septic system,
- To inform rural residents how to properly operate and maintain their private septic system, and
- To minimize the impact of rural septic systems on the quality of surface and ground water.

More than 400 people attended this two-hour class the first year. A follow-up evaluation clearly showed its impact. Every household responding to the survey took positive action and made changes as a result of class information.

The changes ranged from switching dishwasher soap to upgrading septic tanks as recorded in the



Clean Water Impact Statement (September 1994).

When the pilot program was developed, Minnesota allowed individual counties to decide whether or not to regulate septic systems. This is no longer the case. State law now requires septic systems to be installed to code by licensed installers. Anyone selling property is required to disclose information on their septic system. Many counties are requiring septic system inspections and upgrades before issuing building permits.

It's not surprising that this new legislation has heightened public interest. The sewage-treatment education program has expanded to locations across the state, "Train the Trainer" programs for multi-agency audiences are underway and the pro-

ject is developing a youth program for area schools.

Olson has learned this combination of interest and education brings fast results. A new MES publication, the Septic System Owner's Guide, developed through the Educational Development System, found an immediate and enthusiastic audience. "Once people learn how their system operates and how to operate it properly, they usually understand why it should also be properly maintained," Olson says. "They really use the information."

Kathleen Cleberg

What Goes Down the Drain?

As human beings we all produce sewage. How we handle that sewage can protect our waters and our bodies from contamination. Here are septic system tips for maintaining the quality of our ground and surface water resources.

All homeowners should:

- **dispose of hazardous wastes through proper channels, not in wastewater.**
- **minimize the amount of water used.**
- **filter hair, food, grease, lint and other solids out of the wastewater to reduce need for drain cleaners.**
- **reduce use of cleaners, sanitizers and disinfectants by doing more scrubbing.**

Septic owners should:

- **clean (pump) the septic tank through the manhole every 1-2 years.**
- **not use septic tank cleaning products (they can ruin the drainfield).**
- **not plant trees or shrubs on top of or close to the septic tank or drainfield.**

***From *Septic System Owner's Guide*, \$4.00 from all Minnesota Extension Service Offices**

4-H CAMP COUNSELING IN THE 90'S MEANS MORE THAN BUILDING THE PERFECT S'MORE

Every summer more than 2,500 young people pour into Minnesota 4-H camps. But who prepares the counselors for this experience? Where do they learn the games, activities and campfire songs that make camp so much fun?

More importantly, how do they learn to deal with the homesick camper or the troubled child?

Not surprisingly, most counselors train for camp by going to camp. Dennis Moeller, extension educator from Wright County, says State 4-H Camp Counselor training allows young counselors-to-be develop the leadership skills needed to make 4-H camp a valuable experience for young campers.

This year, 16 students from the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development visited the training camps to add to the curriculum. Counselors were prepped on environmental education, first aid skills, team building/adventure initiative and song leading. They assembled for discussions on "What is a Counselor?" and "Understanding Age Groups." One problem-solving session was titled "What To Do If..."

Counselor training included special educational programs like Sun Smart, where Sherri Gahring, an extension specialist, discussed health and safety issues relating to protection from potentially harmful rays, and Minnaqua, a program on water ecology and water habitat presented by Annette Drews, aquatic specialist with the University of Minnesota and the Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to information and ideas, the training camp also supplies real-world experience. Kids from nearby schools are bused in for a few hours of "mini-camp." Counselors are able to practice their skills under close supervision and talk about the experience after the campers leave.

"Sometimes the counselors ask 'How do we get these kids to listen?'" says Cynthia McArthur, extension educator and coordinator of a week-long bicycling camp. "So we ask them 'What would have made you listen at that age?' They do some brainstorming and come up with answers."

After completing their training, counselors fan out all over the state to staff 4-H day camps and resident camps.

Issues facing counselors can be serious. Some campers come from troubled homes and others are away from home for the first time. Counselors must be ready for emotional fallout.

"We're all very aware that all the things that go on in life are going on at camp," McArthur says. "The kids are bringing these things to camp with

them. So we watch very carefully and assume the kids are dealing with heavy issues. If there's a kid who isn't sleeping or won't eat we notice it immediately and talk about how to deal with it."

Every day camp counselors address issues ranging from conservation to computers. Moeller says the experience will affect them long after the campers leave.

"The training camps teach these kids quite a bit," he says. "They learn skills they'll use throughout their lives."

Kathleen Cleberg



Future 4-H camp counselors benefit from College of Education and Human Development research and curriculum.

DENNIS MOELLER

KEN ALBRECHT — MES PARTNER WITH HOPES FOR A CLEANER MINNESOTA RIVER

Ken Albrecht and the Minnesota Extension Service are life-long partners and there is more to come. Albrecht, a North Mankato resident who chairs the Minnesota River Basin Joint Powers Board, began his association with extension as a 4-H'er.

Over the years, he's been a 4-H competition judge and served on the Extension Citizens' Advisory Committee. Now Albrecht and his colleagues on the River Board are working with extension in a mammoth project — the cleanup of the 11-million acre Minnesota River basin. Albrecht, a Nicollet County Commissioner for 13 years, lives overlooking the Minnesota River Valley and knows he faces a challenge: the 335-mile-long river is filthy.

Albrecht says the difference between the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers can be seen at their conjunction near Fort Snelling: the Mississippi is relatively clean; the Minnesota is brown and goey. Albrecht comments, "That's the family farm on its way south, plus a lot of other things." The fish in the Minnesota are so affected by the pollution, he adds, that he would never eat one.

Unlike some river pollution, the mess in the Minnesota is caused mainly by individual polluters, not by industry. Stopping individuals from adding to the contamination is crucial to the cleanup effort, Albrecht notes. "Education is the

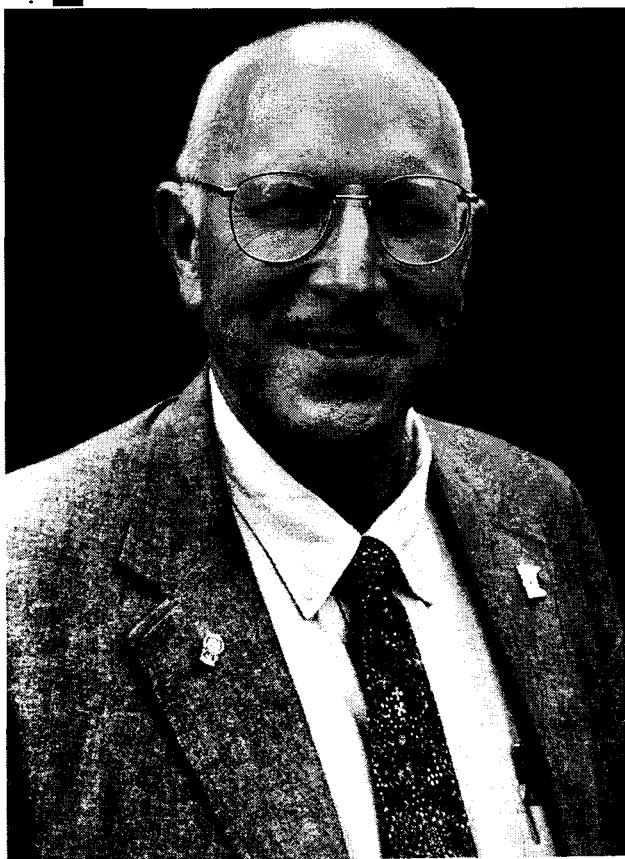
key to it. We have to convince people that it's in their best interests." The Minnesota, Albrecht says, could become a tourist destination because of its recreational potential and historic sites.

Albrecht says the River Board will coordinate the efforts of residents and agencies, including MES educators, to reclaim the river. Extension Educator Lowell Busman worked with a 13-county water cleanup effort earlier and Albrecht had high praise for him. "He worked with schools and brought some high-level technical skills to the project."

The 33-county River Board, Albrecht says, hopes to have extension educators working with local residents in the cleanup push. "Extension educators are skilled, well-educated, bright people who know how to teach others to learn."

Although he knows the cleanup is a huge project, Albrecht, an agricultural engineer and former teacher, is convinced it can be done. "It took 150 years for the river to get this polluted, so we won't clean it up in six months. But it can be done. They did it with the Rhine and it was much more polluted."

Anne Gillespie Lewis



DON BRENNAN

A Look Back at 1995

REMEMBERING A FEW PEOPLE AND PROGRAMS THAT HIGHLIGHTED THE MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE YEAR



← The Minnesota Extension Service is proud to have a member of a Master Gardener Club.

Master Gardeners throughout Minnesota help bring MES horticulture programs and information to state residents of all ages. Leonard Gloeb, a Master Gardener from Ramsey County, is an active volunteer with the St. Paul schools. Here he helps 10-year-old Ben Harris pot a plant at the Como Park Conservatory. Master Gardeners are recruited through county offices, trained by state faculty and then volunteer locally as resource persons on horticulture questions. Their activities include giving lectures, answering telephone questions, writing newspaper articles, holding plant clinics and working with community groups.



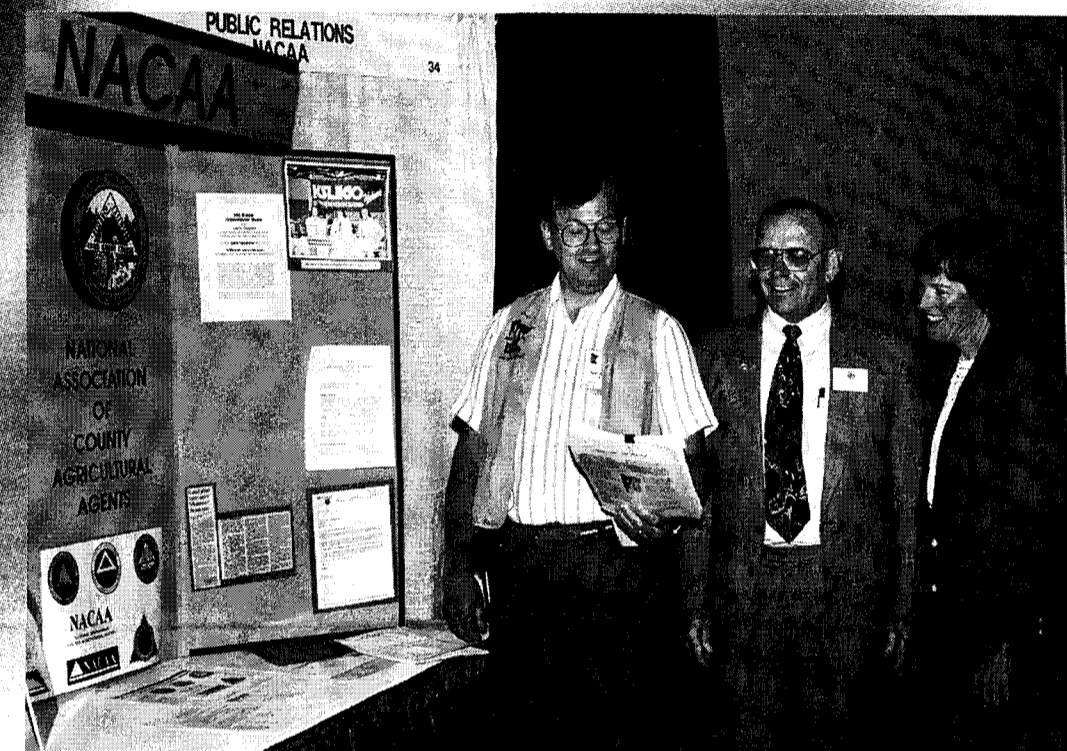
← The Access Minnesota Project, which will bring Internet access to public Minnesota communities. Most Access sites are in MES offices, public libraries, and accessible government offices, schools or libraries. Extension staff and community members are trained to help residents use the computers to obtain information on the Internet. This World Wide Web page explains Access Minnesota and offers a map of the current and soon-to-be-installed Access sites. The project, which runs through spring 1996, is funded by a \$425,000 grant from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. In addition to MES, the University of Minnesota and the State of Minnesota, the other members of the Access partnership are InforMNs, North Star, Sci-MathMN, FirstCallNet and MN Online.



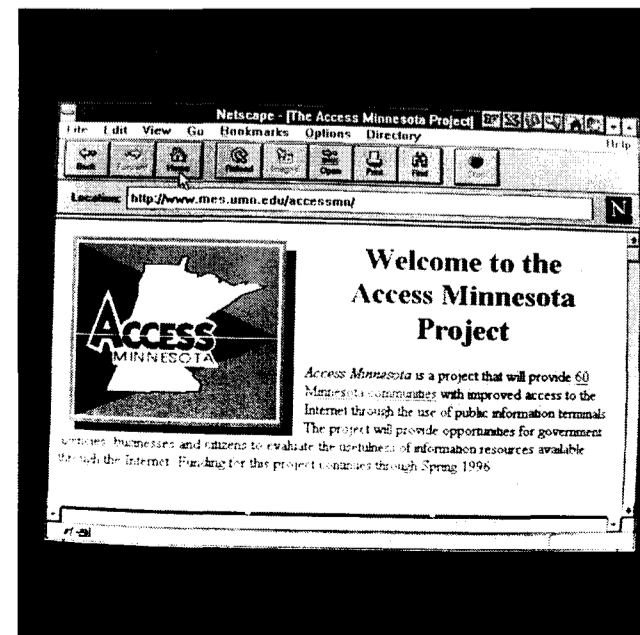
← Pat Borich, Minnesota Extension Service director since 1984, retired in January ending a 36 year extension career. With Gail Skinner-West serving as interim MES director, a national search for Borich's replacement began. Candidates for the director position visited the St. Paul campus this summer. Portions of their presentations were available to county offices via satellite.



← More than 20,000 migrant workers and their family members come to Minnesota during the growing season. Here they work in the sugar beet fields of northwest Minnesota and the fruit and vegetable harvests in the southern part of the state. The MES Farm Safety and Health Program is working to provide basic safety and health education to migrant workers and their families. This summer MES helped train 100 migrant workers in Minnesota safety to help them understand safety, health, and environmental issues and offering them information on their rights as workers and on the services of the Extension Service which was always practicing.



← More than 1,500 extension agricultural agents from across the country attended the National Association of County Agricultural Agents' (NACAA) annual professional development conference held in Bloomington this summer. Looking over some conference materials prior to the opening session of the conference are Neil Broadwater, left, Winona County MES educator and conference chair; Warren Sifferath, Dakota County MES educator and president of NACAA; and Gail Skinner-West, MES interim dean and director, who delivered welcoming remarks.



← The Minnesota Extension Service is on the Internet. MES's Home Page on the World Wide Web allows Internet users to search publications by subject matter, read news releases and newsletters, find out about courses and special programs and follow links to other University of Minnesota and extension-related databases on the Internet. Internet users can read the text of some 400 MES fact sheets, brochures and other educational materials that are available through the Distribution Center. Those who want to purchase the actual publication, including photos, illustrations and charts, can obtain ordering information on-line as well. MES staff and offices now have electronic mail addresses to enable them to exchange messages, information and computer files via the Internet. You can find the MES Home Page at <http://www.mes.umn.edu/>

Building Neighborhoods and Communities

MES, MINNESOTA DESIGN TEAM COLLABORATE TO HELP GRANT COUNTY TAILOR ITS FUTURE TODAY

When 15 people from the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Design Team showed up in Grant County recently, the community buzzed. Design team members brought expertise in architecture, environmental planning, landscape architecture, public education, communication technology and community resource development, all important areas as communities plan for their futures.

Minnesota Design Teams link private citizens, governmental officials, design professionals and academics in their community-serving efforts. The University of Minnesota affiliates include the Minnesota Extension Service (MES), the Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

When design team members visit a community they help local residents visualize the area's future. With those aspirations for the future in mind, residents then began to plan their roles in making today's dreams become tomorrow's reality. Discussions at the Barrett town meeting turned to beautifying the new consolidated school, improving the playground at the Elbow Lake elementary school, improving a local beach in Barrett and constructing a nature trail system.

Like most rural areas with limited budgets, Grant County was hesitant to commit funds for design help before better understanding the area's problems and potential. For a small fee to cover expenses, however, Grant County could bring in the Minnesota Design team volunteers who donate their help as they have done for other small communities in the state. Grant County also is a pilot project of the University of Minnesota's Rural Development Council, which has helped Wabasha County encourage tourism and plan agricultural development.

Communities apply to receive design team help for specific projects. Team members select communities in which to work. They travel to the area and conduct town meetings. There they solicit residents' ideas on improvements they would like for their towns. Late last year and into early 1995, Peggy Knudson, Grant County Extension Educator, worked with Randy Cantrell, MES Collegiate Program Leader at the Humphrey Institute, to organize the Grant County effort and the team's visit.

Steve Laursen, MES Collegiate Program Leader in the College of Natural Resources, says the collaborative effort of the design team, helps communities but it also helps university faculty and students "learn by doing." He says, "This arrangement renews my faith in the good things that can happen when we all work together."

Michael Schroeder, president of the Minnesota Design Team board, praises the alliance between MES and the team. He says that the collaboration between the university and the team produces more and better results than either organization could hope for on its own. "The Grant County visit meant that we were able to view what extension could do for us, and what we could do for extension," Schroeder said.

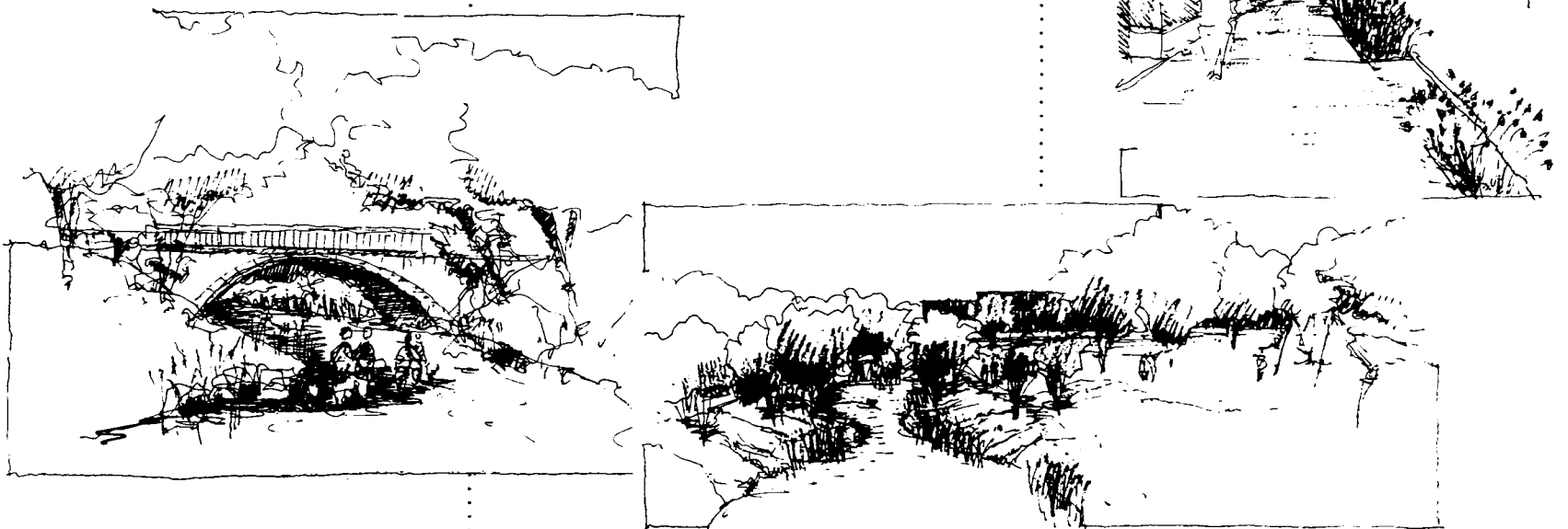
The next steps in Grant County are underway. Knudson says that two College of Natural Resources students and two College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture students are working with professional advisors to bring some of the community's ideas to fruition.

They are working under the guidance of Roger Clemence, MES Collegiate Program Leader in the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture and Dorothy Anderson in the College of Natural Resources. Currently receiving attention are a phased landscape plan for the high school, designs

for beach improvements, landscaping and a new playground at Elbow Lake Elementary School and concept planning of the "Eco-Trail" nature path. Clemence praises the effort as "a way to bring talented students into the process, not just as project assistants but as key players."

Kelly Smith, the school superintendent for this area of Grant County, gave MES and the design team's efforts high marks. "The enthusiasm that the Minnesota Design Team showed for our area of the state was overwhelming," he said. "They have provided us with a number of outstanding ideas to improve the appearance of our school and the surrounding area. Now it's our responsibility as local stake holders to see that some of these ideas become reality."

Keri Nelson



KIDS + CROOKSTON COMPUTERS = A DIVERSITY LESSON, FRIENDSHIPS AND NEW CYBER-SKILLS

Kids and computers are a winning combination already. But can kids learn about other cultures while they surf the Internet, compose electronic mail messages and use desktop publishing software to put together newsletters?

Absolutely, according to organizers of Youth Connecting: University On-Line, a five day computer workshop and cultural diversity lesson held this summer at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Forty sixth graders, half from Ramsey County and half from Polk and Mahnomon counties, found that technology is a tool to teach us how our similarities far outnumber our differences.

The sixth graders and the 15 teen leaders who served as counselors represented urban and rural diversity. Equally important, they represented many racial and ethnic groups so participants got to know others who were different from them, but also alike in their interests and enthusiasm.

Barbara Muesing, Outreach Director at UMC Crookston and MES Collegiate Program Leader, saw an opportunity in Crookston's empty summer dormitories, well-equipped computer labs and inventory of laptop computers normally assigned to UMC students during the school year. Muesing obtained a \$28,000 grant from the Northwest Minnesota Initiative Fund, which she coupled with a \$10,000 MES Creative Program Grant and contributions of money and services from the three participating counties and the University's College of Education and Human Development.

"The generous funding meant that all participants came to five days of 'college' at UMC on full scholarship. In addition, we were able to pay the teen leaders, thus giving them a valuable job experience," Muesing said. "Each On-Line participant was assigned a laptop computer, which the kids used and kept at their sides throughout the week. We were blessed with a superbly qualified program

director, Kim Davidson, computer teacher in the Crookston schools, who really kept the kids' enthusiasm up and tied all the week's elements together."

One of the first activities was establishing participants' electronic mail (e-mail) addresses and teaching them how to send and respond to messages via their computers. "This was a favorite part of the week and a great way for kids, even the shyest, to get to know others and to keep the communication going all week long," Muesing said.

Trudy Dunham, research fellow with the Center for 4-H Youth Development and a curriculum consultant for Minnesota On-Line, agreed. "E-mail helped break the ice," she said. "The kids learned to judge each other on their words and ideas, not on how they looked or where they came from."

In addition to e-mail training, the Youth On-Line members took part in various team-building exercises. They also learned to browse the Internet, use word processing software to write about their experiences and "publish" their ideas in the form of newsletters that they shared with all participants.

Not all their time was spent on computers, however. Several sessions dealt with diversity and racial stereotyping. Noted diversity expert Armida Russell used the Crookston interactive television capabilities to talk to the group and answer questions from her office in the Twin Cities.

To teach them the important role technology plays in modern life, the participants went on field trips to UMC laboratories and livestock facilities, a farm and a sunflower processing plant, all of which used computers extensively. Free time was spent horseback riding, swimming and socializing.

Besides fine-tuning their computer skills, what lessons did the campers learn about themselves and others? Several of them wrote about their experiences in the newsletters that each group wrote and distributed.

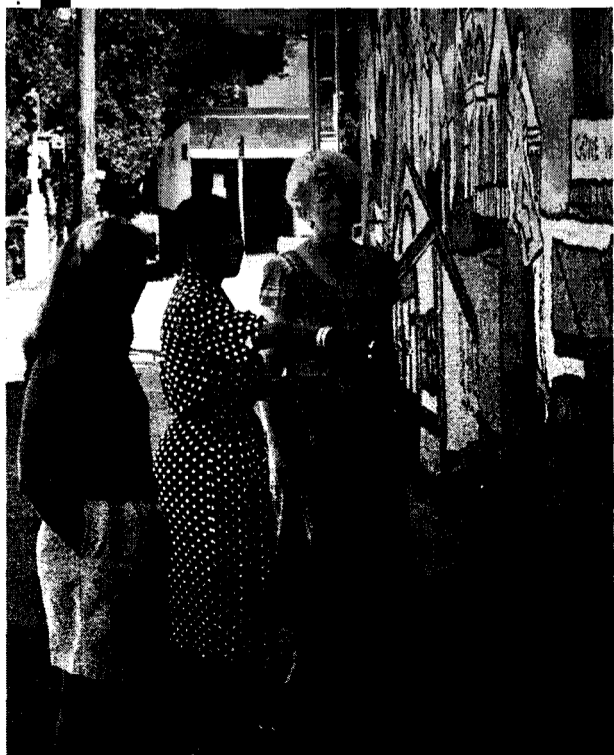
- Tequisha Solomon of St. Paul wrote, "Everybody is different but they are kind of the same. Some times just because people are different races people treat them different. At camp we learned ... how everybody is alike and how people should be treated."
- Nicholas Bisek of Mahnomon wrote, "We are the future, and if we try to live in peace, others will catch on and we will live better lives."

Deedee Nagy



Trudy Dunham, standing, helps University On-Line participants browse the Internet.

DEBRA STONE — AN ACTOR/EDUCATOR WHOSE SKILLS 'STAR' IN A MINNEAPOLIS NEIGHBORHOOD



Debra Stone, center, shows a Harrison neighborhood mural to Marcia Glancy, left, community organizer, and Nancy Lenhart, Carver County MES Educator.

Debra J. Stone's switch from the stage to working as a Hennepin County Extension Educator wasn't as big a change as it sounds.

Stone, an award-winning actor in Chicago, finds as much challenge and drama in getting communities to solve problems as she did in acting.

"I worked in the type of theater that was concerned with social and community issues and I always considered myself an actor/educator. I use a lot of my creative skills in what I do now," says Stone, whose Hennepin County office is near where she spent her early childhood years.

"Working with communities is an art in itself," Stone says. "This type of extension work is very new, and it's important to let the community take the lead. We provide meeting rooms and facilitate for meetings, but I am not the expert; the community people are the experts."

Stone is particularly proud of helping Harrison neighborhood residents shut down a drug house, at least temporarily. "There had been a lot of police calls at the drug house and the block clubs had enough, so the crime and safety committee for Harrison neighborhood decided to do something. We brought together the police, block clubs, landlords and council members for a meeting."

Residents of lower-income neighborhoods such as Harrison are often somewhat wary of extension because they have not had any experiences with it, Stone notes. "This is not about redundancy," says Stone. "We are not just another social service agency, but we have to convince neighborhood residents. We need to have the communities themselves tell us what needs to be done. The whole sense of community building is important. It's also important to sustain those things that are good and positive about the communities. There are many advantages in neighborhoods such as Harrison, including diversity and multi-culturalism."

Stone's approach works. "The Harrison Neighborhood Association gave its distinguished service award to the Minnesota Extension Service. I thought that spoke very highly of our community approach. The community went from hardly knowing anything about extension to being very much aware of our presence."

Anne Gillespie Lewis

Sustaining agriculture

LIVESTOCK SPECIALIZATION TEAM PROJECT HELPS PRODUCERS WORK WITH CHANGE, NOT AGAINST IT

Change is about the only constant today. No one knows that better than Minnesota's livestock producers whose survival may depend on their ability to adapt.

Consider a few facts:

- The number of Minnesota farms with livestock fell dramatically between 1987 and 1992. The number of dairy farms fell by 23 percent while the number of hog operations fell by 17 percent.
- Despite declining numbers of farms, sales of hogs rose 13 percent between 1987 and 1992. During the same years, milk production in the state was nearly steady despite a steady drop in the number of dairy farms and milk cows. Herd size, however, has increased and with that, nuisance concerns about concentrations of animal waste.

The Minnesota Extension Service's Livestock Specialization Team recognized the changes. Their goal was to educate producers, agribusinesses, communities and families about the trends and issues that are changing livestock production forever.

The effort resulted in a notebook of materials—articles, charts, statistics and discussion materials for public meetings—prepared by livestock specialization team members. "Structural Change in the Livestock Industry" examines livestock trends, consumer and environmental issues, technology and governmental policies affecting the industry. It maps out possible impacts on Minnesota producers and others with a vested interest in livestock production and the communities dependent upon it.

Contributors to the notebook were:

- Brian Buhr, Extension Marketing Economist
- Bernard Conlin, Extension Animal Scientist, Dairy Management
- Colleen Gengler, Murray County Extension Educator
- Wayne Hansen, Redwood County Extension Educator
- Lee Johnston, Extension Animal Scientist, Swine
- Bob Koehler, Murray County Extension Educator
- Bill Lazarus, Extension Economist, Farm Management

Publication of the notebook this spring was followed by training sessions for MES educators. Livestock specialization team members are now using the material to conduct meetings and prepare newspaper columns and radio programs in their counties.

Bob Koehler has conducted six such meetings in southwestern Minnesota using the materials and discussion triggers presented in the notebook. He says, "Important things are happening in the industry, and they are having an impact on people and communities. Currently there's a lot of emotion surrounding many of the changes, but facts allow people to make rational decisions and that's what our meetings and news media work offer."

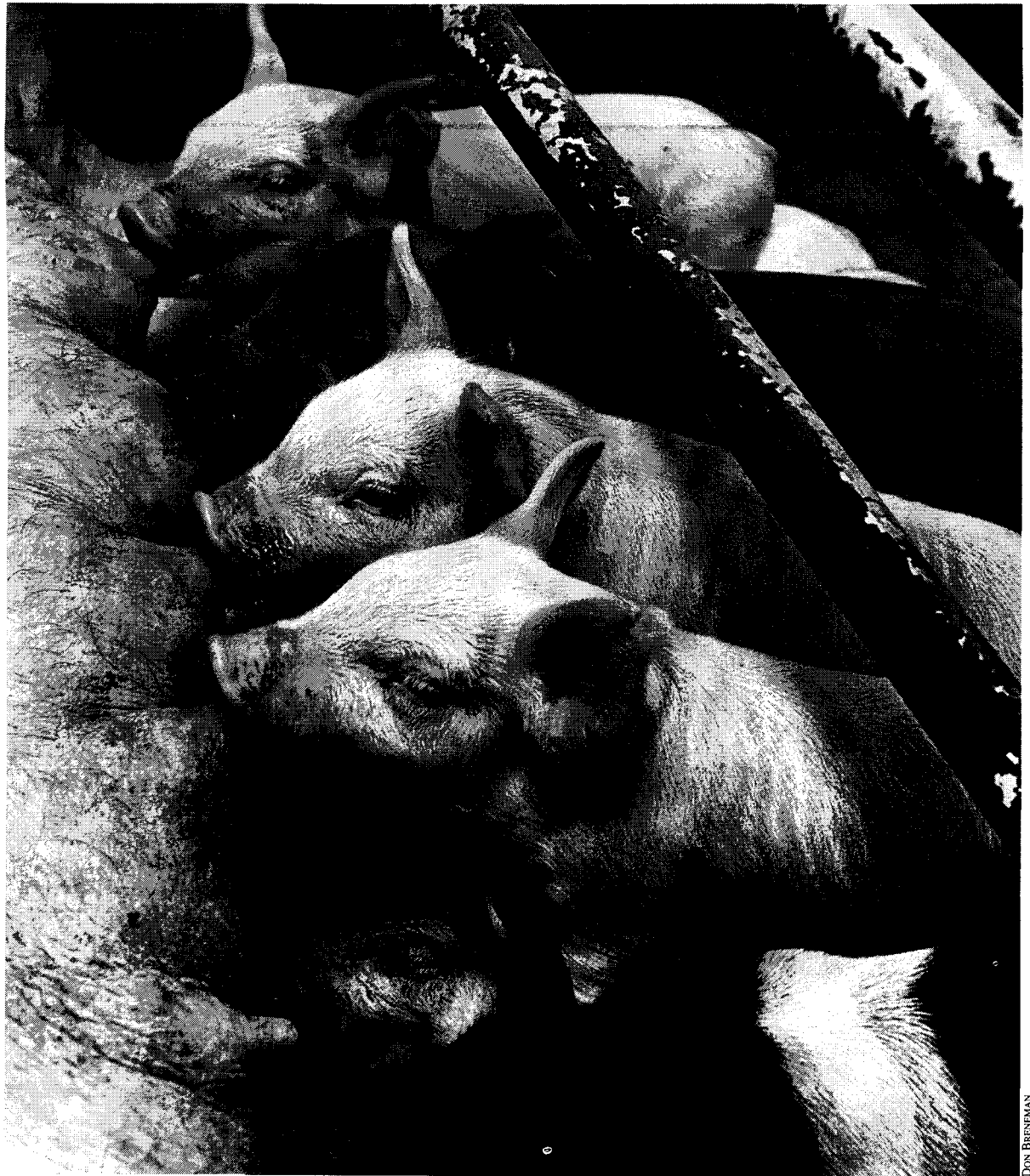
Bill Lazarus and Brian Buhr of the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics helped

guide production and distribution of the notebook. Copies went to state legislators serving on agricultural committees to help them understand complex issues involved in laws and policies regulating the industry. Additional topics will be added as needed. Articles and statistics on the beef industry, for example, will go into the notebook later this year.

Comments on "Structural Change in the Livestock Industry" have been favorable. Koehler reports that county commissioners from his area have praised the material and the meetings. He hopes that the effort will help residents understand

changes that are already affecting their lives and the vitality of their communities. Lazarus says he hopes the material will help Minnesota livestock producers and their communities make wise decisions in the future. He says, "One goal of this material is to help sort out those aspects of structural change that producers and others can manage productively for a more prosperous future."

Deedee Nagy



YOU DON'T WANT TO STEP IN IT, BUT MANURE PROJECT IMPROVES MINNESOTA'S WATER QUALITY, CROPS

It smells bad and you hope you don't step in it. You certainly hope it doesn't end up in a lake or river where you like to swim or fish. It's easy to have a negative attitude about manure, an inevitable byproduct of livestock production.

Nevertheless, there is a positive side to manure. It helps plants, including farm crops, grow better. It can take the place of expensive commercial fertilizer in crop production.

But using manure as fertilizer isn't as simple as spreading it on the nearest field. It's important to know what nutrients are in the manure, what nutrients the crop will need, and what nutrients are already in the soil. It's a process that requires knowledge and planning, and if it isn't done right, the manure can become a pollutant. Helping farmers make their way through this manure management process is a main goal of a two-year educational project underway in 10 counties in the Minnesota River basin.

Several agencies provide funding for the project, including local counties, the University of Minnesota, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The project is a precursor to the larger Minnesota River Project, a multi-agency effort to improve the water quality of the Minnesota River and its tributaries.

The Minnesota Extension Service has been designated to spearhead the educational effort for the manure project. Extension educators Rich Fisher of Chippewa County and Joe Neubauer of McLeod County are heavily involved. They work closely with Jeffrey Lopez, manure resource coordinator, whose position is funded by the project. Counties that are part of the project include Big Stone, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle,

McLeod, Meeker, Pope, Renville, Swift and Yellow Medicine.

The first step in putting together a manure management plan is to collect manure samples and send them to a laboratory for a nutrient analysis of nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, moisture and dry matter. Combining this information with figures on the total pounds or gallons of manure produced on the farm over a year gives total pounds of various nutrients available from the manure to be applied to fields.

"These figures provide a yearly manure management plan for producers to follow," says Fisher. "Not only can they apply their manure at agronomic rates to avoid pollution problems, but they get more benefit out of the manure volume through increased crop profitability."

"Our goal has been to do plans for 13 individual farms per county, or a total of 130, each year," says Fisher. "After about a year and a half, we've done 200, so we're ahead of schedule."

A computer program developed at the University of Minnesota makes the development of individual manure management plans much easier, says Lopez. U of M soil scientist Mike Schmitt and economists Richard Levins and Wynn Richardson developed the computer program, called Manure Application Planner (MAP).

Lopez helps farmers in other areas besides planning. He also does farm site evaluations to help farmers determine if they are in compliance with county and state pollution control regulations.

"Our project can help farmers who may be in violation of regulations," he says. "We can help them through the process of cleaning up an operation without the threat of regulatory penalty. We work through education, allowing the farmer to see what needs to be done."

Neubauer says the services the project offers have been especially popular in McLeod County, where 30 manure management plans have been developed so far. He adds, "We can see the increase in the number of feedlot permit applications from the county. In the last couple of years we've gone from 20-25 percent of farms having permits to 35-40 percent."

Joseph Kurtz



Precise weights and nutrient analyses of manure help farmers apply exactly the right quantities to their fields.

BOB OLEN — BRINGING BERRY FARMING TO THE ARROWHEAD GIVES THE ECONOMY A BOOST

Lots of folks in Minnesota's Arrowhead counties think extension is the berries—as in blueberries, strawberries and raspberries. Just ask Bob Olen, the St. Louis County Extension Educator who has helped boost the number of small fruit operations from two or three a decade ago to nearly 70 today. Sales from the three crops topped one million dollars in 1994.

When mining employment declined sharply in the Arrowhead region, many people who already owned land were looking for supplemental income. "The terrain and climate here are not suitable for full-scale farming, but small fruit production is doable for family units," Olen notes. "It has provided income and it's also a good source of fresh fruit for consumers."

New fruit varieties were tested at the Agricultural Experiment Station in Grand Rapids and field-tested to check their suitability. One surprise to many people, Olen adds, was that the berries had a higher sugar content and yield than those grown further south.

Olen, who grew up in the Twin City suburbs and has been in St. Louis County for 18 years, adds that he hasn't accomplished this by himself, saying that his extension colleague Kendall Dykhuis, Dr. David Wildung from the Experiment

Station and many others have been involved. Extension has provided expertise on soil suitability, varieties, cultivation and other aspects of small fruit production.

Using small-fruit or greenhouse businesses as a supplemental income is "all part of the changing economy," says Olen. "You don't need a lot of acres," he adds. "If you're running 10 acres of strawberries, that's a lot." Many of the growers use environmentally friendly practices such as integrated pest management, he says. Olen hopes to encourage production of native fruits such as currants and chokecherries and the use of native plants in landscaping.

Olen's work can help commercial and noncommercial growers equally. When the fungus that caused the Irish potato famine a century ago was found locally (it can also affect tomatoes and peppers), he and MES plant pathologist Cynthia Ash developed an educational kit to help both commercial growers and backyard gardeners deal with the fungus.

Anne Gillespie Lewis



DON BRENNAN

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Managing Editor


Deedee Nagy

Design/Layout

Lisa Peck

Photo Editor

Don Breneman

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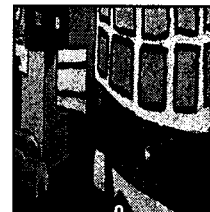
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For questions about editorial content or distribution, contact Deedee Nagy at (612) 625-0288.

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University of Minnesota
240 Coffey Hall
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