

# EXTENOVATIONS

For All of Extension

Vol. 19, No. 1, March 1998

## HOGS CAN BE STINKY NEIGHBORS, BUT RUSH CITY PRODUCERS LOOKED TO EXTENSION TO SWEETEN THE AIR

**Y**ou need to sustain your family, which means making a living. But if you're making a living by raising hogs close to town, neighbors may not appreciate the manure odors. That's what happened to Mark and Nancy Moulton, Rush City, Minn.

Their farm is less than a quarter-mile from a new school, and the town of Rush City is expanding toward their farm. When they received a complaint about the odor problem a few years ago, one of the people they turned to for advice was Rod Elmstrand, Extension educator in Chisago County.

"Rod gave us some very good advice," says Mark Moulton. "He introduced us to a consultant on manure management planning and helped us prepare a grant" (to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Sustainable Agriculture Program).

The Moultons received the grant, which helped fund a deep straw, hoop-house farrowing system to minimize odors. The system helped insure they'd be able to continue raising hogs and remain good neighbors. They wanted to stay away from liquid systems because of the odor problems.

Mark and Nancy "are doing everything they can to reduce odor problems," Elmstrand says. Mark says the only time there's an odor problem is when they clean the barns, and it only lasts a few days. Neighbors are not bothered by odor from the deep bedded system, Mark adds.

They originally started with one hoop house. They now have three, and are thinking of adding a fourth.

With the help of a number of cooperators, they're monitoring the economic, labor and environmental performance of the swine finishing system. Other cooperators include Michelle Smith, U.S. Department of Agriculture, NRCS, Chisago County; Philip Nesse, Extension educator-manure utilization; and Larry Jacobson, Extension engineer who specializes in livestock housing.

Jack Sperbeck

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DON BRENNAN

**Nancy and Mark Moulton of Rush City raise hogs and work at being good neighbors by keeping odors to a minimum.**

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SERVICE

# EXTENSION INNOVATIONS

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## NEED GARDENING ADVICE ON A SUNDAY MORNING? INFO-U OFFERS IT VIA PHONE, FAX, WEB

**I**nformation is power. For the 130,000 people who accessed Extension's Info-U service in 1997, it was the power to survive last spring's floods, to clothe and feed their families, to stay healthy and to improve their lawns and gardens.

The consumer service known as Info-U delivers research-based Extension information to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Consumers who call 624-2200 in the Twin Cities area or 1-800-525-8636 in participating counties can select and listen to short educational tapes on topics ranging from families and foods to housing, clothing, water quality and gardening. Another option allows callers with fax machines to select fact sheets, primarily on yard, garden and nutrition topics, to be faxed to them. Computer users with World Wide Web access can read and print out Info-U scripts on hundreds of topics at [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu). The most often requested topics are on parenting. These include a popular series on what to expect and how to deal with common concerns during a baby's first 12 months of life.

Since 1988 when it began in the Duluth area, Info-U has grown rapidly, both in the number of topics covered and in consumer visits, according to Debby Newman, Info-U coordinator. In 1997 when spring floods ravaged the Minnesota and Red River valleys, county Extension offices and relief agencies distributed thousands of Info-U business cards with a list of flood cleanup topics available on tape.

That quick response during the floods highlighted Info-U's strengths, Newman said. During a crisis, county Extension offices and relief agencies are swamped with calls, many of them asking similar questions. "At times we would have had too many calls for Extension educators in the affected counties to answer," Newman said. "The service saved the Extension staff valuable time and money." In fact, the Info-U audio system was in



Bob Hursh of Communication and Educational Technology Services (formerly EDS) and Debby Newman, Info-U Coordinator, work on promoting Info-U and keeping topics timely.

use nearly 3,500 hours last year, the equivalent of 425 days of staff time.

During the 1997 floods, Newman worked with Extension specialists to make sure tapes on topics like moisture damage, flood cleanup and power outages were up to date. Campus and field staff worked together on more than 100 Info-U scripts last year.

So far, 54 Minnesota counties have adopted Info-U as part of their consumer outreach program, according to Newman. Extension staff in those counties use the news media, brochures, magnets and business cards with information on the types of topics available to market the consumer service.

Newman tries to visit each participating county yearly, and last year she took requests for about two dozen topics to be added to the service. She also works with public health staff, garden center operators and local librarians to promote Info-U throughout the state.

This year, the Info-U leadership team plans to involve at least 15 more counties in the program. Their goal is also to increase system use and to add more scripts in response to county needs, according to Newman.

Josh Dingman

## LET INFO-U ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS

You can obtain a catalog of Info-U phone message tapes and faxed topics from participating county offices of the University of Minnesota Extension Service. To reach Info-U, the 24-hour consumer help service from the University of Minnesota Extension Service, call:

**624-2200 (Metro) or 1-800-525-8636 (Outstate)**

When directed, enter the 3 digit number of the message that you want to hear, or enter 100 for seasonal or timely topics. Rotary phone users will hear a current topic. For Info-U faxback service, call the numbers above and a voice prompt will tell you how to order a faxback catalog. The service features more than 400 yard, gardening and nutrition fact sheets that can be sent free to your fax machine.

Or, visit Info-U on the World Wide Web:

[www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)

Scroll through the topics under "Choose a Link" and select Info-U from the list. You can then search electronically for scripts on topics of interest to you.

## PARENTS FOREVER EDUCATES DIVORCING COUPLES ON CHILDREN'S NEEDS AND SMOOTH TRANSITION

**E**ven after they divorce, couples with children remain parents forever. Some couples are able to resolve custody issues easily and help their children cope with the divorce, but others are unable or unwilling to do so. The result is painful for children, who often find themselves in the middle between angry parents. In addition, parental wrangling over custody can clog court calendars and may mean repeated post-decree court visits.

Parents Forever, the child-centered divorce education program produced by the University of Minnesota Extension Service, addresses both these issues. The pilot program, begun in Winona County, proved so successful that it was used by the Minnesota Supreme Court as a model in drafting recent legislation requiring all parents contesting custody in Minnesota to undergo a divorce education course. Not surprisingly, the Parents Forever curriculum has been the program chosen for use in 90 percent of the classes, according to Tracy Habisch-Ahlin, who is statewide coordinator of Parents Forever.

Since divorce education has been court-mandated only since January 1, there are as yet few statistics on its success. However, a Winona County custody evaluator has noted a sharp (more than 50 percent) decrease in court-ordered custody evaluations and attributed the drop to help given divorcing couples in the Parents Forever pilot program.

In addition, written evaluations by Parents Forever program pilot participants—some of whom attended the classes only because they were ordered to do so—have been enthusiastic. Many said the classes made them resolve not to make the children choose between parents and not to burden the children with too much responsibility. Often, participants said they would recommend the program to friends.

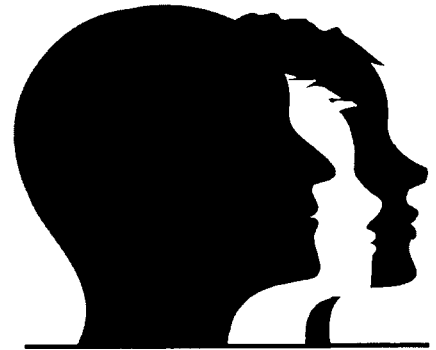
Why is Parents Forever such a success? According to Ron Pitzer, Extension Family Sociologist who has contributed research and expertise to

the curriculum, the program—which usually consists of approximately 20 hours spread over six sessions—succeeds because of its scope. “It succeeds for three reasons,” says Pitzer. “First, because it’s more comprehensive than other programs. Second, because if it’s done the way we like, with a collaboration of people doing the teaching, there is a feeling of community ownership. And third, it succeeds because we’ve provided a good training component with the program.”

The Parents Forever curriculum includes components on abuse and also on economics, two topics that other divorce education programs often ignore. Topics in the multi-session program are taught by experts in each area, from lawyers to budget counselors to social service professionals. All undergo extensive training. Statewide coordinator of the training is Minell Tralle, Extension Educator from Sherburne County. “When we do the training,” Tralle says, “we get an overwhelming response from those we train about how important the program is and how much it is needed. It’s exceeded our wildest dreams in how quickly people have caught on to the program.”

Writing the Parents Forever curriculum, which includes five educator guides and five corresponding parent handbooks, overheads for each session and a 3-ring binder of information on building a community collaborative, has been a collaborative project in itself, according to Karen Burke, the production manager in Communication and Educational Technology Services (formerly EDS) who edited and supervised the production of the program material. “About 40 people contributed to the program materials,” she says. “It’s the largest project I’ve ever been involved with in Extension and also perhaps the most rewarding.”

*Anne Gillespie Lewis*



### PARENTS FOREVER

EDUCATION FOR FAMILIES  
IN DIVORCE TRANSITION

## 4-H FOUNDATION AWARDS FIRST ADULT SCHOLARSHIP

**T**he 4-H Foundation has awarded its first scholarship to a 4-H volunteer leader or 4-H alumnus who is returning to an institution of higher education. Cindy Mossberg, a 4-H club leader in Anoka County for eight years and an active 4-H parent, was awarded the \$2,000 scholarship to use as she works toward a degree in human resource management. She currently studies at Anoka-Ramsey Community College and plans to transfer to the University of Minnesota to complete her bachelor of science degree.

Mossberg also works as a secretary in the Sherburne County Extension Office in Elk River. She said, “This scholarship has created an opportunity for me that wouldn’t have been possible otherwise. As an adult and a parent, I usually would direct resources toward my children, but the scholarship is a reminder that adults also need to further their education and their careers. I’m pleased to have that chance now.”

The 4-H adult scholarship is made possible through the contributions of an anonymous donor.

*Deedee Nagy*



Cindy Mossberg, right, with her daughter, Brianna, and son, Ben. Mossberg says it was her children’s membership in Anoka County 4-H clubs that led to her eight years as a volunteer leader.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CINDY MOSSBERG

## PRESIDENT YUDOF HELPS INITIATE WORDMARK

**U**niversity of Minnesota President Mark Yudof helped County Commissioner Gilbert Dewes hang the new sign for the Crow Wing County Extension office in Brainerd recently. The new Extension wordmark was introduced at Annual Conference in October with guidelines for its use on publications, stationery and signs issued on the Web and in print throughout the winter. The wordmark reflects Extension's name change to University of Minnesota Extension Service and, for the first time, incorporates the official University of Minnesota wordmark into Extension's design.

Other image changes are also underway. This issue marks the final one for *Extenovations*, the employee newspaper for the past 18 years. In its place will be a newsletter for another important Extension audience, elected and appointed officials including legislators, county commissioners, and county extension committee members. Publication of that newsletter is expected to begin this summer.

*Deedee Nagy*



University of Minnesota President Mark Yudof, left, and Crow Wing County Commissioner Gilbert Dewes install the new Extension sign outside new offices in the county courthouse in Brainerd.

## EXTENSION-TRAINED INTERNET VOLUNTEERS WEAVE THEIR 'WEB' IN 5 COUNTIES

**P**aula Vanecek is planning Internet web pages that will help the world learn about the history of Kanabec and Isanti counties. Ernie Blaisdell is showing young people at Mora Community Center how to use the Internet as a research tool for homework assignments. Jean Wolfe has conducted an in-service class on Internet skills for teachers at St. Mary's School in Pine City. Robert Walz is developing a plan to link welfare recipients with employers through the Internet.

Vanecek, Blaisdell, Wolfe, and Walz are all Master Internet Volunteers. Along with some 45 other volunteers, they recently completed a series of 10 training sessions on Internet skills through a University of Minnesota Extension Service pilot project. Extension educators in the five-county PICK'M Cluster north of the Twin Cities and St. Paul campus faculty and staff from the Information Technology team in Communication and Educational Technology Services planned the Master Internet Volunteer training program. They patterned the project after the well-known Master Gardener Program, with Extension training volunteers who commit to using their skills to benefit the community. Each participant in the Master Internet Volunteer program pledged to use his or her skills for at least 30 hours of volunteer work in the community.

A University of Minnesota Extension Service Director's Creative Grant provided part of the funding to develop the pilot program. One of the first people to whom Vanecek passed on her Internet skills was her husband, Victor. He's a case management consultant for people with disabilities, and now uses the Internet to search for job openings appropriate for his clients.

The Swedish heritage of Kanabec and Isanti counties is the focus of Vanecek's project for the web. She's working with the Kanabec History Center and the Isanti County Historical Society.

Vanecek could have taken a class on the Internet through a community college, but was attracted to the volunteer concept of the Extension class. "I've been a volunteer at heart for a long time," she says. "I like the idea of multiplying the knowledge base—I always thought the Master Gardener Pro-



The team that is bringing the Master Internet Volunteer training program to the PICK'M counties includes Lise Hansen, seated, and, standing from left, Terry Salmela, Dorene Davick, Paul Edstrom, Bill Bomash, Jean Anderson, Mert Jensen, Rae Montgomery, Steve Drazkowski, Karen Matthes and Rod Elmstrand.

gram was a stroke of genius. By donating volunteer hours, you're giving back to the community."

Blaisdell is a retired state trooper who is now a community liaison officer for the Mora Police Department. Last fall a mobile home was refurbished into a community center for Mora's young people. It's equipped with several computers. Blaisdell is at the center after school three days a week to assist young people with use of the Internet.

He says his training as a Master Internet Volunteer makes him more comfortable helping kids with computer and Internet projects. "I got a lot out of it," he says of the training. "Now there's a lot I can give to those I'm working with."

Wolfe, whose children attend St. Mary's School, says there is a computer with Internet access in each of the school's classrooms. Her in-service work with teachers focused on using the Internet for electronic mail and efficient searches.

Walz is a volunteer for Communities Investing in Families, an initiative funded by the McKnight Foundation to involve communities in supporting the welfare-to-work effort. "You can't always get people to come to meetings, but the Internet provides a way to get people involved and connect with potential employers through e-mail and a web site," he says. Walz is also showing churches in the Twin Cities and east central Minnesota how to

establish an Internet presence.

Several Master Internet Volunteers are teaching at local libraries. One is doing a web page for a chamber of commerce in a small town, one is working with farmers, and several are working with senior citizens at community centers.

The Master Internet Volunteer pilot project began in the PICK'M Cluster of Pine, Isanti, Chisago, Kanabec, and Mille Lacs counties. Rod Elmstrand, Extension educator in Chisago County, is credited by his colleagues with originating the idea for the program in the cluster.

The Information Technology Team developed the course outline for the pilot project and much of the course material. They set up an Internet web site for the project and helped with training.

Montgomery says the course outline and curriculum materials for the Master Internet Volunteer Program are on the Internet at [www.extension.umn.edu/~miv](http://www.extension.umn.edu/~miv). She encourages other counties and clusters to consider implementing a Master Internet Volunteer Program. "The Technology team will maintain and update the curriculum," she says. "County extension staff are responsible for teaching or arranging for instructors to deliver the curriculum in their communities."

*Joseph Kurtz*

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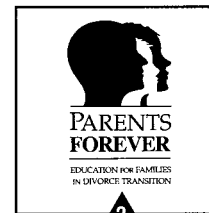
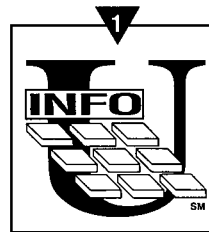
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