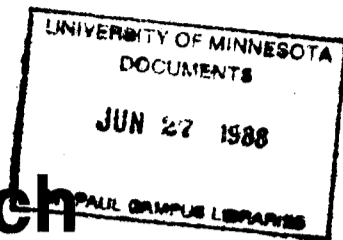


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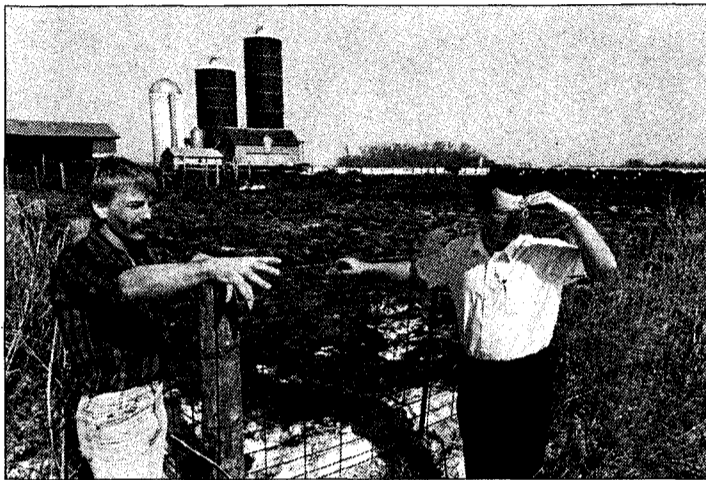
Three South Central Counties Tackle Water Quality with Education, Research

Water quality is in the spotlight, both as a priority for the Minnesota Extension Service and as a headline grabber when such tragedies as the petroleum spill into the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers occurred last winter. While Minnesota's rivers, lakes and groundwater have been spared such calamities so far, three Minnesota counties aren't waiting for federal or state legislation to begin wrestling with the problem.

Initiated by Watonwan County, they've begun their own rural water quality project, monitoring for bacterial and agricultural chemical contamination in local water supplies. Faribault, Martin and Watonwan counties, on their own initiative and with widespread voluntary cooperation from farm operators, have an ambitious WATER "Water-quality Assessment Through Education and Research" Project under way.

"We can't be waiting for state government, federal government, because there are so many programs we need money for and there just isn't enough money available," says Watonwan County extension committee chairperson Lila Evers. "I think there are a lot of people in our own county realizing this. They're saying, 'hey, we can do some of this on our own.' And if we can get some help with a grant, or whatever, so much the better, we'll be able to do that much more."

They're not going it alone, however. The FMW WATER Project was developed jointly by the three counties' Extension Service staffs, Soil Conservation Service district conservationists, and representatives of the Soil



Livestock producer Layne Evers (left), St. James, explains his plans for a manure management system to Watonwan County Extension agent Gary Wyatt. Conservation plantings, land use revisions and proper manure spreading rates are the changes being discussed for preventing manure runoff and leaching of nitrates to ground waters.

and Water Conservation Districts. They also have access to the University of Minnesota's Center for Agricultural Impacts on Water Quality. A \$9,300 grant awarded by the Southeastern Minnesota Initiative Fund assists the project.

The project educates rural residents on the potential for water quality damage inherent in both the use of agricultural chemicals and the presence of livestock operations. It also is doing comprehensive testing of wells for nitrate, bacteria, sulfate and pesticide contamination, and choosing sites for long term monitoring.

Educational and testing elements were linked. To get the program's special reduced water testing fee, farmers had to attend at least one educational session.

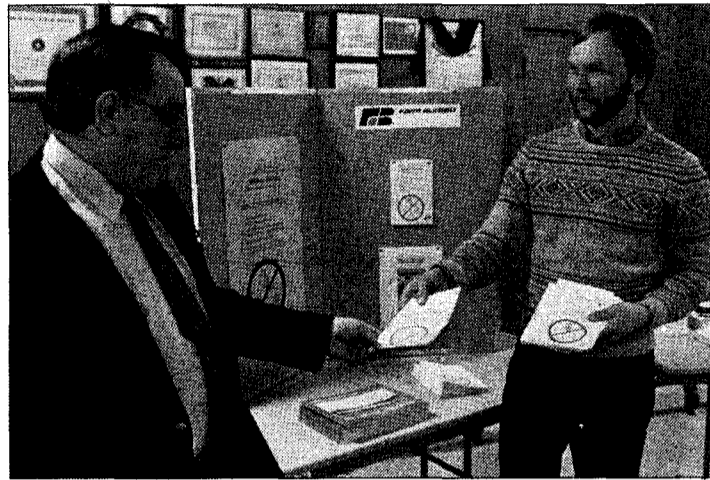
And attend they did! "When you look at an issue that's a problem and a concern to people in our county, they're aggressive people who go ahead and search for

some answers," said Faribault extension agent Henry Bollum. "That's what happened on water quality. They wanted to know, on their own wells as well as county wide, what the quality of our water was."

In Watonwan, nearly a quarter of farm operators participated. County extension agent Gary Wyatt noted that every township had at least 10 wells tested for nitrates, bacteria, and sulfates, or seven widely used pesticides.

The news was good for the region's residents, because the tests largely came back negative. Martin County extension agent John Bohnker contrasted those results with public perception. "As a county we do feel there's lots of concern out there," he said. "Every time we open a newspaper there's an article about groundwater. There are a lot of misconceptions across the state and the country about where the problems are."

"It was reassuring in our county



Watonwan County Farm Bureau President Paul Torkelson (right) hands the new Farm Bureau self-help groundwater bulletin to Al Busa, Farm Bureau field representative, at the St. James educational session, March 1, 1988. The county Farm Bureau organization sent the publication to its members and provided additional copies for the program participants.



Lila Evers, Watonwan County Extension Committee Chairperson, is taking a basic water sample from the machine shed before the water goes through any treatment equipment. There were 340 water samples tested in the three counties.

to test 40 wells for pesticides and nitrates and not come up with many problems. Only one of the samples came up positive and that was a surface water source. None of our groundwater sources came up with any pesticides," Bohnker said.

"It was also reassuring to see that our soil types here are a good

enough safeguard, with the pesticides we use, that they break down before they cause any problems in our groundwater," he said.

Across all three counties, only 8 percent of the wells showed nitrate levels greater than the 10 parts per million level needing

- WATER QUALITY continued on page 4

Agents Told Farmers Must Communicate To Consumers

Farmers need to help get the word out about agriculture's importance to consumers, according to Laura Heuser, a Michigan horticulturist who spoke to agricultural agents of the Minnesota Extension Service recently. She is an organizer of American Agri-Women and has spoken in 48 states over the past 19 years in an effort to "tell agriculture's story."

"Farm women are courageous, valiant people. We do things like sitting down at a computer and running financial programs to driving a truck with bad brakes to the elevator," she joked.

Heuser encouraged farm families to become more involved in the political process and press for needed legislation. "Politics is fun, exciting — and sexy," she said.

She also encouraged farmers to use the news media to tell their story. "Agriculture is a great story, but people don't understand it. We must educate the public with the 'truth' about growing food," Heuser said. ■

— Jack Sperbeck

Also in this issue of EXTENOVATIONS

Tree planting program among top in the nation, page 2.

4-H training teens to teach about the effects of alcohol use, page 3.

Extension program teaches financial management to prisoners, page 3.

Tourism teleconference delivered to 22 sites around the state during National Tourism Week, page 4.

Governor Perpich visits workshop held in Eveleth, page 4.

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Minnesota Goes for the Green – Tree Planting Program Among Top in Nation

Minnesota's forests are growing with the help of a successful Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) for trees and lots of support from Extension specialists working closely with many state and federal agencies.

In fact, the tree planting program has been so well received here that Minnesota is one of the leading states in the percentage of possible acres enrolled in CRP tree efforts, according to Tom Kroll, Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forester and coordinator of the tree planting aspect of CRP. He credits extension foresters Mel Baughman and Scotty Scholten as well as wildlife specialist Jim Kitts and economist Steve Taff for their contributions to the program's success.

In the two and a half years since CRP began enlisting marginal cropland acres into trees, about 33,000 acres have been committed. Although the tree acres are only about two percent of the total CRP land (the rest are planted in grass), Kroll says Minnesota's tree acres are the most in any state outside of the deep south where trees are emphasized over grass.

"Outstanding" is how Kroll terms Extension's ability to get information out and respond quickly to changing mandates

from Washington, D.C. Two slide tape programs produced by Baughman, Scholten and communication specialist Don Breneman were completed this winter and have been distributed to 16 midwestern states. These are aimed at farmers and emphasize what's involved in tree planting and what the potential benefits can be.

In addition to those major U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded projects, Extension has helped with several news and information campaigns to raise farmers' awareness of CRP. News articles on the tax consequences of tree planting, upcoming sign-up periods and other benefits of CRP enrollment went out to newspapers and broadcast outlets as well as to Extension offices statewide.

Last summer, Baughman helped spearhead an information campaign to enroll farmers in a CRP poplar-planting project in the Granite Falls area. Northern States Power was considering changing its coal-fired generator in that city to a wood-burning plant. Before deciding whether to make the conversion, the utility wanted to know how much interest farmers had in supplying wood for the plant.

News articles, feature stories and photos about poplar-planting



Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

Looking over a stand of mature hybrid poplar trees on the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station at Rosemount are, left, Clifford Wilcox, superintendent of the experiment station, and Mel Baughman, Extension forestry specialist. An Extension news campaign last summer spotlighted the tree-planting aspects of the Conservation Reserve Program to farmers in the Granite Falls area where Northern States Power was considering converting its coal generator to a wood-burning one.

went out from Educational Development System, targeted to news media in southwest and west central Minnesota, resulting in a record number of inquiries

and a high level of interest among farmers.

Although the power company eventually decided not to convert

to wood-burning, the media blitz spurred a successful CRP sign-up. Kroll said most of the farmers who initially showed an interest in planting trees are now considering planting grass instead so the goal of taking marginal cropland out of production was still well served by the effort.

Written with David Marcouiller, Baughman's publication "Financial Analysis of Tree Planting Under the Conservation Reserve Program in Minnesota" has been distributed widely to answer farmers' questions about what CRP sign-up could mean to them. Kroll also cited Scholten, wildlife specialist Jim Kitts and economist Steve Taff for their work with the inter-agency technical committee, which includes representatives of many governmental and conservation groups, and helps guide the program in the state.

"All in all, it's been a beneficial association for everyone concerned," Kroll said. "Extension's ability to move quickly and command the public's attention certainly contributed to the six successful sign-up periods to date. It's a good example of how cooperation among agencies and groups can accomplish a lot." ■

— Deedee Nagy

People Who Make a Difference New Challenges Await Mary Ellen Miller

(Editor's note: This article about Mower County extension agent Mary Ellen Miller appeared recently in the Austin Daily Herald. We thought you would enjoy seeing what that publication had to say about the long career and dedicated service of one of our colleagues. We reprint it with permission of the newspaper.)

Mary Ellen Miller and thousands of Extension Service employees nationwide are polishing a new act. The modern county agent

network began in 1914 with the Smith-Lever Act. Its mission: a cooperative educational venture between federal and state governments to teach rural people how to improve their lives. That goal remains, but a new focus is being taken on issues to set priorities for future strategies. This means, county agents (and Miller is one of them) will be at the forefront of the Extension Service's challenging and interesting events in the years to come. She has been making a

difference in the Mower County Extension Service for 20 years. Miller and her husband, Don, have four children, and two grandchildren. They are proud of all of them and praise the family's rural roots for pointing the way to lifetime adventures for all.

She is a native of Freeborn County who graduated from the University of Minnesota with a degree in home economics. Her father was a farmer who took his bride after the Great Depression. She has one sister.

Mary Ellen Tuberty (her maiden name) is celebrating two decades of extension work this year. Her husband, Don, is her biggest fan, but he has relaxed some of his farming ventures for health reasons, while continuing to sell seed corn.

As the Mower County extension service home economist and family living program coordinator, Miller does for a living, what she lives to do: help families. "My programs, like others of the Extension Service, are designed to help families learn of preventive measures, access researched information to make decisions

and become as self-sufficient as possible," she says. "Our purpose has never wavered from that." Miller, like all others in the Extension Service, has had to keep up with changes and there will never be more than those ahead.

Myron D. Johnsrud (no relation to Mower County Extension Director Harlan Johnsrud) is the administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's extension service. He says the move to target significant new issues began three years ago in response to the farm crisis.

The farm crisis caused the Extension Service to react

quickly to help rural residents. A major refocus and redirection of funds and resources went to farm crisis programs. In other words, the Extension Service ceased to be a resource center for recipes and gardening tips and became a leaner and meaner agency attacking social issues resulting from the farm crisis.

Now, the Extension Service will tackle eight priority initiatives. They are alternative agricultural opportunities; building human capital; competitiveness and profitability of American agriculture; conservation and

— MARY ELLEN MILLER
continued on page 4



Photo courtesy of the Austin Daily Herald

Mower County Extension Agent Mary Ellen Miller

EXTENOVATIONS

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Teens Help Peers Make Alcohol Decisions



Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

4-H members involved in the Alcohol Decisions workshop in April met in small groups to share ideas and plans for their counties' programs.

Traffic accidents are the number one killer of Minnesota's young people, and nearly two-thirds of those fatalities involve alcohol use.

Those startling facts have helped spur the 4-H program's "Alcohol Decisions" effort to enlist teens in teaching peers and elementary school children about the effects of alcohol use. In April, 48 teens from 10 counties attended a meeting sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, 4-H and the Minnesota Safety Council to recognize their

volunteer efforts and allow them to share ideas with other teens doing similar work in their home counties.

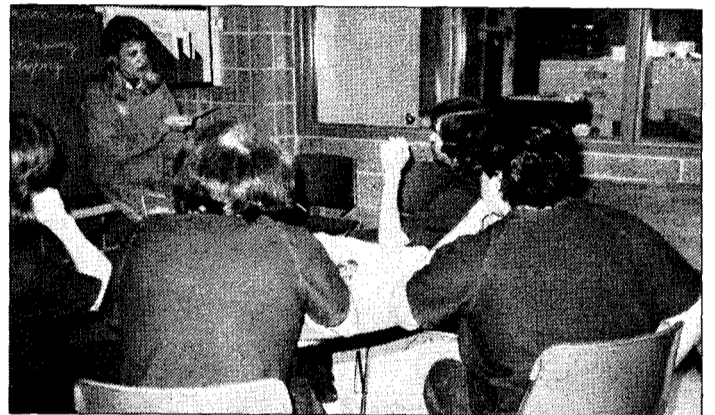
According to 4-H Youth Development Specialist Sharon Wright, the Alcohol Decisions project has reached more than 3,500 elementary, high school and college students as well as their parents since efforts began. Of these, about 2,700 have been elementary students who typically hear several talks and participate in classroom discussions with trained high school

students. The information presented helps them plan their own future behavior when they are confronted with pressures to drink and drive or to ride with others who may have been drinking.

The teens at the Alcohol Decisions workshop were from Meeker, McLeod, Crow Wing, Dakota, Blue Earth, Otter Tail, Stearns, Benton, Morrison, Nicollet, Le Sueur and Sibley Counties. ■

Itasca County Program Teaches Financial Management to Prisoners

"When I had a job, my money got spent as soon as I got it. I don't have anything to show for it now." An Itasca County prisoner expresses his concern for financial management. "The problem is that nobody ever told me anything about money except when you got it, spend it. It's helped me to talk about it. You know, there's a lot more to money than just spending it."



Extenovations photo courtesy of Itasca County Extension Office

Sue Davis, Itasca County financial management educator, teaches principals of budgeting and decisionmaking to men being held in the local jail.

because of low motivation and the environment of the prison meeting room," Davis said. "Prisoners do not receive any kind of financial assistance from the county while they're serving time. However, the curriculum we're using to teach financial management to them includes decisionmaking, communicating, setting priorities, assessing change and keeping records. These are skills valuable to individuals whatever their financial situations."

Davis encourages those she has worked with to meet with a budget consultant when they are

Lindsey says the survey results will help 4-H make the State Fair time more educational and productive in the future. The findings could have implications for judging procedures, time scheduling for fair participants, post-fair follow-up and other aspects of planning and organizing the young person's time.

He adds that expected remodeling of the 4-H Building may force reductions in the number of 4-H members who can live in the building's dormitory. Information derived from this research will help 4-H set priorities for programs and age groups to make the best use of the fair experience. ■

-- Deedee Nagy

Teaching prisoners financial management has been a goal for Sue Davis, financial management educator and program assistant in Itasca County, and Janie O'Connor, Extension Home Economist in that county.

The process of reaching the inmates started in discussions with the county sheriff, probation officers and the county adult basic education coordinator, who teaches weekly classes for students preparing to take high school equivalency exams. All agreed to work with Davis.

Since that time, she has met with 18 inmates in the county jail using both group and private consultations. "It's been a difficult audience to teach

released. To date, one released inmate has contacted Davis and told her that he is now better able to budget the income from his new job and has reached some of the short-term goals he set as a result of his work with her while in jail.

He said, "I was able to talk to Sue about my goals. I want to change things in my life so I don't end up in there any more."

-- Janie O'Connor

Survey Shows How 4-H State Fair Visit Teaches "Life Skills"

Beyond learning about livestock, sewing, photography or whatever project they choose, how well do 4-H members learn valuable life skills from their State Fair experience with the organization? This is the question that 4-H youth development specialist Dan Lindsey attempted to answer from a survey of more than 300 4-H State Fair participants last year.

Interviews with the young people during their days at the fair revealed some interesting things about how valuable the experience was, according to Lindsey. Clearly, the 4-H members in the 14- to 17-year-old age range rated the Fair highest on how it taught them to cope with change, develop and exchange ideas, pursue their own potential and practice leadership.

Citizens' Advisory Committee Welcomes New Members

The Minnesota Extension Citizens' Advisory Committee met this spring to visit their legislators at the State Capitol and to discuss current issues with the dean and director. Chuck Stranberg of Kandiyohi County, chair of the group for 1988-89, assumed his post at the meeting. He replaces Joyce Bohlen of LeSueur County. Incoming chair-elect will be John Ihlenfeld of Steele County. Pat Borich welcomed the committee's new members and presented certificates of appreciation to outgoing members. ■



Extenovations photos by Don Breneman

Members of the Extension Citizens' Advisory Committee who have completed their terms are, from left, Eldon "Tex" Larson, Wilkin County; Margaret Matalamaki, Itasca County; Blake Peterson, Waseca County (extension faculty liaison); Margaret Anderson, Blue Earth County (4-H representative); Willis Miller, Scott County; outgoing chair Joyce Bohlen, LeSueur County, and Pat Borich. Not shown are Albin Carlson, Cass County; Janet Frosilan, Watonwan County, and Carol Shields, Ramsey County (extension faculty liaison).



New members of the Extension Citizens' Advisory Committee are, seated from left, Richard Nelson, Fillmore County; Lois Lewis, Koochiching County (extension faculty liaison); Charles Stranberg, Kandiyohi County and John Ihlenfeld, Steele County. Standing from left are Dennis Schentzel, Yellow Medicine County; Dennis Keller, Traverse County; Elaine Torpet, Polk County; Heimer Swanson, Pipestone County; Richard Jones, Ramsey County (extension faculty liaison) and Pat Borich. New members who are not shown include Marilyn Krueger, St. Louis County; Kurt Moreland, Lake County; Robert Peterson, Waseca County; Gail Skare, Beltrami County, and Clarissa Walker, Hennepin County.

Counties Tackle Water Quality Issue

- continued from page 1

treatment. Fewer than 5 percent showed significant levels of bacteria. Just 16 percent had sulfate readings high enough to effect the taste of the water and warrant treatment. And, only the one Martin County surface water sample showed any contamination from a pesticide.

Combined with special reduced fees for well water tests, the urgency of water quality concerns attracted capacity crowds to nearly all the educational sessions. The pesticide scan was a particular incentive. Available for \$85, it normally cost about \$350.

Each county scheduled two educational sessions. They were led by experts from the Extension Service, Minnesota's Agricultural Experiment Station, and Minnesota's departments of Agriculture and Health. The first session discussed the water hydrology cycle and likely paths for contamination, presented current data on water quality, discussed the health significance of home water supplies, and explained the basic water sampling procedures.

Session two, about one month

later, presented and evaluated the first sampling results, and discussed soil and chemical management practices to minimize future contamination risk. Properly capping abandoned wells was emphasized, and additional water testing was urged.

That the program was well received and its information heeded is reflected in some of the water quality "goals" participants said they would pursue this year. Numerous participants said they would pay closer attention to reducing their use of chemicals. Many also said they were going to work at controlling potential point source pollution that could come from improper storage, handling and disposal of chemicals, or from cleaning and maintenance of tanks and equipment.

Better than 86 percent of current participants have evaluated the program positively. They said they came away better informed, and supportive of the ongoing well monitoring program.

"I think that our county people attending the two educational meetings really did us a service,"

Evers said. "In the future, something's going to have to be done with all the chemicals and things that are being put in the soil. What we're going to have to do, what government will have to do, that's something our farmers will have to accommodate. The government will be taking some of the chemicals off the market, and so forth."

Echoing that response, Bohnker added a cautionary note. "All the newspapers were saying there were problems in the state, but none of the agencies that were doing the tests were doing very many out here. We didn't think that handful was enough to say 'yes we do' or 'no we don't' have a problem," he said.

"It's important to know because if, say, atrazine is taken off the market here because of problems elsewhere, then we could lose a very valuable chemical when it's not causing us any contamination problems. We can lose a lot of our competitiveness if we lose a lot of our herbicides across the nation," he said. ■

-- Larry Etkin



Photo courtesy of Jan Dzwonkowski, Gilbert, MN

Governor Rudy Perpich visits with participants at St. Louis County's Minnesota Extension Service-sponsored workshop, Starting a Bed and Breakfast Business held in March at Eveleth. Gov. Perpich spoke at the event planned by Eileen Anderson, St. Louis County extension agent, and attended by 36 persons. Program presenters from Extension included Harold Alexander, Barbara Koth, Glenn Kreag, Wanda Olson and Anderson. Cooperating agencies who helped make the event possible were the Small Business Development Center, University of Minnesota-Duluth, Northeast Minnesota Office of Tourism in Duluth, St. Louis County's Administrative Department and Health Department as well as Extension's Community Economic Development, Home Economics and Sea Grant programs.

New Challenges for Mary Ellen Miller

- continued from page 2

management of natural resources; family and economic well-being; improving nutrition, diet and health; revitalizing rural America; and water quality.

"Those new issues will have to be addressed," say Miller, "There are so many changes in our society today that it is necessary to make changes and to be able to adjust to them." She points to the greater family complexities of working parents and single parents, as well as families; economic stability. Also, Miller warns about the ever-increasing aged population in Mower County.

To be sure, she says, the age-old extension goals of strengthening agriculture through families, youths and community service projects will never be abandoned. It's just that the work of the Extension Service has taken on a new "look."

Miller points to three sessions this week on teen suicide problems as one example of the new problems being confronted by the Extension Service. The work of extension has also become a decidedly more business-oriented. Miller is in the midst of a series of "Get Business-Wise" workshops including a workshop for small business entrepreneurs. It's not a recipe exchange or "who grows the biggest vegetables" enterprise. It's meeting the problems and challenges of family life head-on, according to Miller.

She works as the cluster leader for home economists in Mower, Freeborn, Steele and Rice counties. The backup of UM's extension network in 86 Minnesota counties, plus the valuable assistance of volunteers help her complete her assigned tasks. "But, all of this," she says, "is just a new variation of our long-standing purpose for existence. We are here to help people learn,

become more aware of the world around them, to identify problems and make decisions. That's what the Extension Service is here for."

The satisfaction she derives from her job comes from the changes she sees in her clients. "We start something. There's a spill over of the knowledge or skills we teach and, then, they start something. That's when you see positive results, when people do it on their own," says Miller.

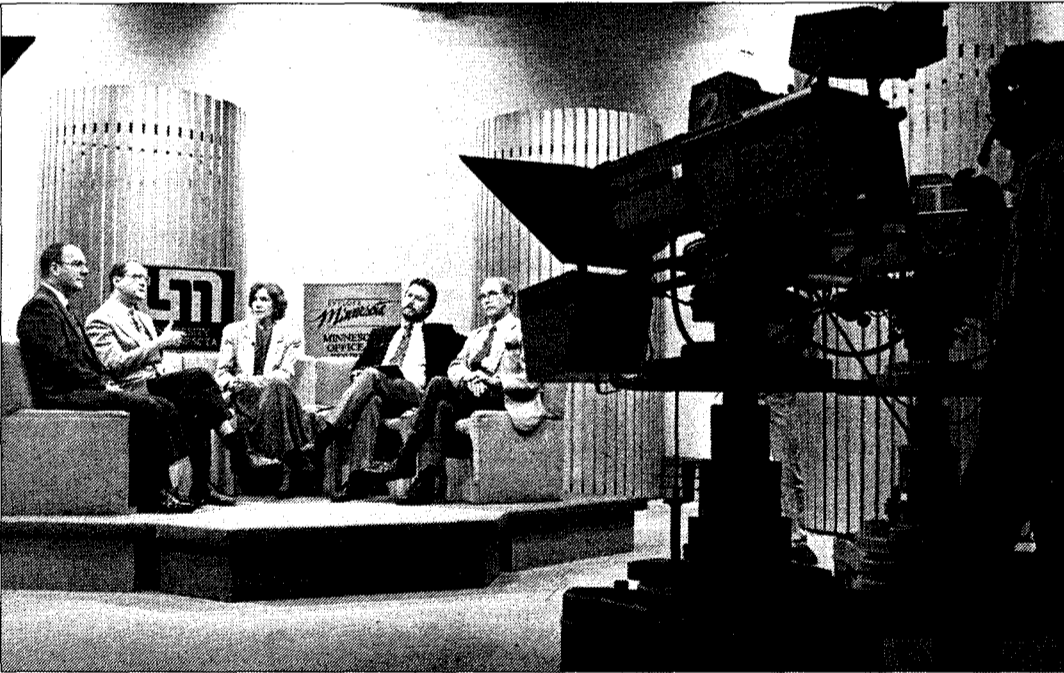
Miller praises volunteers for helping her complete the important work of the Extension Service's home economist. But, clearly, she is the one on whom the responsibilities rest for "making things work."

The home economist uses workshops, media publicity, correspondence studies, computers, videos and publications for "spreading the gospel of home economics and family living" in Mower County.

Today it may be teen suicide or handling hazardous household wastes. Tomorrow, it may be financial management and home-based businesses. Whatever the topic, if it has to do with families, rural and urban, the home economist will be where she prefers to be: in the middle helping solve problems. Nobody has done it better for the last 20 years in the Mower County Extension Service than Mary Ellen Miller. Home Economist non-pareil. ■

-- Lee Bonorden
Austin Daily Herald

Tourism Teleconference Links 22 Sites



Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

Explore Minnesota Hospitality was the theme of a May tourism teleconference delivered to 22 sites around the state and involving more than 1,000 participants. Originating from the KTCA-TV studios in St. Paul, the conference included this panel discussion involving, from left, Dave Allison, hospitality consultant from Duluth; Jim Connolly, Extension communication specialist from the Department of Rhetoric; Lieutenant Governor Marlene Johnson; Hank Todd, director of the Minnesota Office of Tourism, and Larry Simonson, Extension tourism specialist. Coordinator for the project was Glenn Kreag, area Extension agent in recreation and tourism development with the Sea Grant Extension program. Barbara Koth, assistant Extension specialist in tourism development, was program director for the satellite teleconference, which was held during National Tourism Week and was the only such educational effort attempted anywhere in the nation for the benefit of resort owners and related businesses.

In brief . . . In brief . . . In brief

Larry Simonson, Extension tourism specialist, recently won the Outstanding Individual in Tourism Award given annually by the Minnesota Office of Tourism on behalf of the state's tourism industry. He was cited for his programs, research studies and communications efforts such as the newsletter Minnesota Tourist Travel Notes and extension publications.

Leonard Hertz, Extension horticulturist, has won the Meritorious Service Award from the North Central Region of the IR-4 (Inter Regional Research Project), which is involved in the clearance of animal drugs, biorationals and pesticides for minor or specialty uses. Hertz is the Minnesota coordinator for the project and has concentrated on herbicide uses.

Bill Mudge, Extension dairyman, received the Outstanding Service Award from the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) at its annual convention. He was honored for his work with the national and regional DHIA since 1960. Mudge has served on the North Central Extension Dairyman Subgroup and has been chairman for two years.