

# EXTENSIONS

Supplement - September 1983

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## Extension programs in depressed economy

### Northeast Thrust helps unemployed deal with basics

The steady paycheck is long gone and now the unemployment to tide you over is running out. Suddenly, all the help available in your community is becoming more important to you. It's summer 1983.

Many find this problem all too real today on Minnesota's Iron Range where, in three of the counties, Itasca, St. Louis, and Lake, unemployment is said to fluctuate between 18 and 24 percent.

In trying to help people reglue their splintered lives, the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service, in fall 1982, expanded its programs to assist families dealing with the effects of unemployment, explains Lorilee Sandmann, district director, Northeast District.

"The program is referred to as the Northeast Thrust and it concentrates on five counties: Koochiching, Itasca, St. Louis, Lake, and Cook," she says.

This story centers on two of those programs: Volunteer Budget Consultants and Food Consultants. Both address basics: available dollars and the food and other essentials these can buy.

#### Volunteer Budget Consultants

Fifteen extension-trained volunteer budget consultants are working on a one-to-one basis in these three counties: Itasca, St. Louis, and Lake. Many of the volunteers' own families have been affected by unemployment so the problems and questions aren't new to them.

In the first two months of the program, information reached 679 individuals (half of them men). Networking with community agencies and groups to explain the program meant the 15 volunteers made 102 group presentations. These, plus the time spent in self-study, resulted in a total of 335 volunteer service hours.

"One of the goals of the program is to minimize the stress of unemployment by providing a supportive and helpful environment for the people who need the information," says Kathy Mangum, coordinator of the program.

Volunteer budget consultants help individuals approach creditors with the kind of information that creditors need and then help individuals put together a repayment plan.

Here are some of the reactions heard by volunteers from people who have been helped by the program. "I really need someone to talk to." "It's hard to talk at home." "You don't judge me."

Many people are continuing to feel the devastating effects of layoffs, unemployment, rising costs and reduced financial assistance, and the related feelings of frustration and despair. While not much can be done to immediately solve the problems themselves, extension is offering alternative approaches to handling them. Stretching food dollars, managing dwindling budgets, dealing

with stress, and working with existing resources are only a few of the topics being addressed by extension agents and specialists today. While this supplement illustrates major extension efforts in these areas, there are many more unpublicized programs that are helping in Minnesota's communities. The intent here is to recognize all of these by exemplifying a few.

### Farmers find financial planning in emergency phone line

The Minnesota FARMAID program generated 319 calls for assistance between April 15 and June 15, according to Dick Hawkins, farm management economist and coordinator of the program.

Technically called the Minnesota Farm Financial Planning Assistance Program, FARMAID was a joint effort of the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. The program ended June 15.

The Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service was allocated \$35,000 through the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to conduct the two-month emergency program. The program included an 800 phone number for farmers and lenders to call and request assistance.

Cash-flow difficulties, management problems, and catastrophes like hail and livestock diseases were the three main reasons farmers called for help.

A team of 14 extension professionals including management specialists, area agents, and county agents provided confidential financial planning help to farmers who called. They used a telephone hook-up to the university computer to help farmers analyze their financial situation, and studied long and short

FARMAID continued on page 2

### Self sufficiency sought in four-year Hmong project

The word Hmong means "free," but for the more than 9,200 Hmong now living in the Twin City area, it also means those who survived.

Having survived war in Southeast Asia and refugee camps in Thailand, it might seem that life in Minnesota would be easy, but it doesn't work that way.

Not long ago, the Hmong lived in small mountain villages in Laos and were a closely knit, tribal people. Today, their family units have been torn apart and they live in a fast-paced, alien culture. With drastic cultural changes, family breakup, and language barriers the Hmong can soon find themselves isolated and unemployable.

Being refugees separated from family and in a new land has to be difficult at best, but a new four-year extension project plans to ease the transition by helping over 70 Hmong

families become economically self-supporting.

The project, raising and marketing specialty garden produce, will utilize the farming skill of the Hmong and will help them form a marketing cooperative that they will entirely own and operate by the end of the fourth year.

Warren Sifferath, Dakota County extension director, is heading up the project during the first growing season. Extension plans to phase itself out of the project by the end of the four years, so getting the project off on the right foot is critical. During his involvement in the project, Sifferath will continue in his administrative responsibilities in Dakota County, but will primarily be investigating needed production and marketing methods, and working directly with

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Hmong plant tomatoes on irrigated farm near Farmington.

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# Families live resourcefully through Northwest District training

## FARMAID continued from page 1

range alternative solutions. Farmers then used this information to discuss alternatives with their lenders.

"I was extremely pleased with the way our team pitched in and went to work on the project," Hawkins said. "In spite of the 'knot hole' we were squeezed through due to time and job pressure, we all grew in our jobs.

"What we found in the countryside from FARMAID should be translated into extension programs of work for the future," he added.

—Jack Sperbeck  
Communication Resources

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the training participants, university scientists, the Lao Family Community, Inc., and metropolitan area extension agents.

To finance the project, the extension service has developed a proposal known as "A Minnesota Agricultural Enterprise Project for New Americans." The period of funding will run from May 1983 through February 1987, and calls for a combination of government and private foundation support. Total support for the first year received as of June 20 is \$471,675.

Support for the project has been received from Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services, the National Office of Refugee Resettlement (through the Minnesota Department of Public Welfare), the Chicago Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Dakota County Board of Commissioners, and the Northwest Area, St. Paul; Mardag, and Bigelow Foundations.

By 1988, the cooperative is expected to have weaned itself from the support and to be paying salaries and turning a profit.

To facilitate the project, the University of Minnesota has leased a 160-acre irrigated farm in Farmington for growing the produce; within four

Money management training and nutrition education are fast becoming a high priority for some Northwest District home economics family living agents. Sharon Torbenson, Becker County, and Deb Matero, Pennington County, are teaching handicapped and elderly people and low-income and refugee families how to live resourcefully.



Torbenson

Low-income families living on White Earth Indian Reservation asked Torbenson to provide nutritious snack ideas for children. She chose recipes that included commodity foods—a resource some families found difficult to use. Torbenson also found that teaching nutrition through a day care center on the reservation was effective. "It was a good place to reach people as mothers came to pick up their children," she explains.

Finding clothes that fit well is

often difficult for physically handicapped persons. One of Torbenson's tailoring classes included two handicapped women. She commented, "They were able to save money by sewing their own clothes. They had never been able to sew anything as complex as a blazer because of their severe fitting problems."

Torbenson also acts as a consultant with senior citizens' centers and with a Vietnamese refugee group. "The Vietnamese wanted to learn how to save grocery money and make wise food choices." Overcoming a language barrier was not difficult for her because of the many visuals she used.

Teaching resourceful money management was Deb Matero's task as she worked with five mentally retarded adults at the Occupational Development Center in Thief River Falls. "Each of them received a small amount of money regularly and wanted to learn how to manage it," Matero explained. "We worked with a money board. They put money into envelopes designated for specific

purposes, like going to the movies." Matero also helped them set up a store-keeping situation to practice recognizing and using different money denominations.

Long-range budget planning for couples planning marriage is gaining interest in Matero's area. Using an IBM personal computer, she counsels couples on setting a budget and living within an income. "An important part of counseling is discussing how money will be spent and who will make the decisions," says Matero. "This is one way for extension to reach young people who generally don't belong to extension clubs yet, but are too old for 4-H."

Barb Klixbull, Northwest District director, echoes that sentiment. "These are excellent examples of agents working through existing programs....The handicapped, low-income people, and young married couples are the groups hardest hit by unemployment—they want to learn new ways to cope."

Cynthia Anderson  
—Communication Resources



Warren Sifferath (left), Dakota County extension director, and Xang Vang, produce and marketing intern

years total acres are expected to reach about 350.

The Hmong were excellent farmers in their native Laos, and the use of their existing skills is one of this program's strengths. The ability to farm is not enough, however, in a

land where agriculture is big business, and that's where the marketing cooperative comes in.

One of the first responsibilities of the cooperative is to find markets for the specialty produce. One such market has already been found; Gedney

Company has contracted for pickle cucumbers.

By both growing and marketing, the Hmong expect greater income. In future years they will be opening a high-quality produce shop in the Twin City area.

In addition to growing and marketing of produce, the cooperative will operate a packing shed for receiving produce from the field. The shed will wash, grade, and prepare produce for delivery. Since no shed of this type currently operates in the Twin City area, the Hmong may also be able to offer it as a service to non-Hmong growers in the area.

According to Director Norm Brown, the project emphasizes the ability to market and become self-supporting, but also encourages the strong family tradition of the Hmong people. "Educational programs will be designed to strengthen family life and involve young people in 4-H youth development programs," says Brown. "We want to help families adjust to their new country."

—Richard Sherman  
Communication Resources

## Disabled youth seminar planned for Camp Courage

Helping volunteers and professionals initiate or improve programs for disabled youth is the topic for a seminar, "Programming For Disabled Youth," to be held October 19-21,

1983 at Camp Courage, Maple Lake, Minnesota.

Sponsored by Minnesota 4-H and the Office of Special Programs, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, this program is designed for participants who are serving able-bodied youth, but who are interested in expanding their services to include the disabled.

Professionals, parents, and disabled youth will introduce participants to the major categories of disabilities. They will discuss program opportunities from a parent's and a young person's point of view, and will demonstrate how community resources can be used for pro-

gramming. Presenters and participants will share creative programming ideas. Resource materials will be available for browsing.

Participants will have an opportunity to enjoy the recreational facilities and grounds of Camp Courage, a facility specifically designed for the disabled.

For more information and registration, please contact: Sandra Becker, Programming For Disabled Youth, O.S.P., 405 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108, (612) 373-0725.

—Jennifer O'Neill  
Office of Special Programs

## Extenovations

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



Kathy Mangum (left), coordinator of Budget Consultants, reacts favorably to the way volunteer Ed Maki of Silver Bay worked with a neighbor who had asked budgeting questions. Ed is one of seven volunteer budget consultants in Lake County. Also pictured are Cathy Solheim, Lake County extension agent, home economics family living, and Linda Carlson of Silver Bay.



During a training session, Linda Bradley (center), coordinator for Food Consultants, works with Sadonna Brorson (left) of Deer River and Jillouise Bergman of Two Harbors. Here, they work together to compare the labels and contents of several brands of beef stew.

## NORTHEAST continued from page 1

Privacy is guarded. Keeping information confidential is essential in such small communities. Anonymous statistics may be gathered, such as number of people in a family and whether they own a home, but no one other than the volunteer collects the actual name and address. Not even the extension office is privy to these names or addresses.

It actually takes door knocking to get a program like this underway, Mangum says. Extension does networking with other agencies to help individuals find knowledge for immediate help. After the crisis is alleviated they can work their way back to the volunteer budget consultant. Of course the program is helped by messages in the news media, but until the point of real need is reached, those messages may not be heard or read, Mangum says.

Yes, the program has helped delay some foreclosures and repossession actions. During the two-day training session to become a volunteer budget consultant, practical skills are combined with research-based information from extension. These are some of the topics covered: getting control

of finances by using budgets and spending plans, stretching the utility and insurance dollars, mortgage delinquency, foreclosure, and repossession.

Volunteer budget consultants are enthusiastic about the training they receive. "I wish school could have been like this... fun and learning at the same time," and "I can't believe I 'sat' for two entire days and was never bored," are two comments. Volunteer budget consultants work within a 10-mile radius of their homes.

Mangum moved from the St. Paul campus to Hibbing to begin the program and to work with it nine months. The volunteers were recruited and trained through the efforts of Linda Johnson, St. Louis County extension agent; Beth Williams, Itasca County extension agent; and Cathy Solheim, Lake County extension agent, all working together with Mangum.

### Food Consultants

Linda Bradley, St. Louis County extension agent in home economics family living, Duluth, is coordinator of the food consultant and volunteer program. Training local residents to bring information to the community

is the approach this program uses, too.

During the first five months, food consultants made about 6,800 contacts. This has included personal work with displays at shopping malls, demonstrations to groups at churches, community group classes arranged by community education, handing out information at commodity food distributions sites, and displays and demonstrations at emergency food shelves.

The program started with paid staff members and by February 15, volunteer food consultants were trained and began doing volunteer food consulting in their communities. Irene Peterson, project nutrition educator, conducted the training program. They learned to teach bread baking, figuring out cost and size per serving, buying and cost comparison of fruit and vegetables, and comparison of pre-packaged products versus homemade.

"The program has taken the first five months to get organized and established," Bradley says. "Food consultants are now feeling that their communities know that they are present and know the kinds of information they can receive from them."

Food consultants have been making contact with families who are new to extension programs. Individuals or groups can also request food consultants' help.

There is community networking here, too, with newsletters of community organizations glad to include news of the food consultant program for their readers.

A workshop-luncheon for 30 was held in Hibbing in April with the extension food consultant program hosting emergency food shelf volunteers. The menu featured food shelf commodity foods. There was an explanation of Food Consultants and short talks on how to use some of the foods such as dry milk, flour, dry eggs, beans, peas, and lentils. Also pointed out were serving sizes for different ages, the basic four food groups, and a daily food guide.

Media is being used often to inform the public about the program. "Two of the food consultants have regular news columns and two others have developed a monthly radio program," Bradley says. "They have been very creative in promoting the program with methods that best fit their communities."

—Mary Kay O'Hearn  
Communication Resources

## Food shelves cut red tape, bridge crisis

Bob and Sue are recent arrivals in Dodge County. Although they have jobs lined up for the near future, their need for food is immediate and critical. Like them, Al has just found a job, but his first paycheck won't arrive for a month and his personal resources are completely exhausted for meeting day-to-day needs. Mary, a young mother, has also been looking for work consistently and sees no hope of employment in the immediate future. Although she is finally eligible for food stamps, she must wait an additional two weeks for final red tape to be handled and benefits to begin. Anna is typical of the significant percentage of the "old elderly" living in Dodge County who have become unable to cope with inflation. Although she has supported herself all her life, the cost of everyday living has made it impossible for her to afford even basic needs.

These names have been changed, but the stories behind them are familiar ones throughout Minnesota. And yet in Dodge County the story does not end here. Instead, it begins with

the work of the Dodge County Resource Council, a cooperative community planning group of 21 human resource agencies. A current project of the council is maintaining an emergency food shelf program. As Dodge County extension agent Donna Rae Waldock describes it, the food shelf concept is used to meet short-



Donna Rae Waldock (center), Dodge County extension agent, works the emergency food shelves with Ross Johnson and Pam Pogatz.

term needs and plug gaps for people in crisis situations. While other agencies require paperwork and turnover time, the food shelf program guarantees that immediate needs will be given priority. Within two hours, recipients like Bob and Sue, Al, Mary,

and Anna can be given enough food to last for two weeks.

Just how that happens is where extension fits in. To get the project going, Waldock provided the Resource Council with alternatives she had researched. In the past, charitable organizations like churches or service clubs had given food in emergency situations. However, while some needy families received food from several sources, others got nothing. Donated food boxes tended to be put together haphazardly. Although a citizen's action council had operated a successful program, it had proved too costly to continue. Good nutrition and low-cost, efficient management were uppermost in her mind as Waldock developed a list of suggested nonperishable food items for a family of four for two weeks. This list was then modified to meet the specific needs of each family referred to the program. And so the work of extension educators and cooperative planners on the Resource Council established a firm groundwork. Through networking, identifying needy families, and individually carrying out small tasks, the project was kept manageable for staff members. Accomplishments were taking place that would not otherwise occur, and

yet the people power didn't stop there.

Presented with the challenge to help, area 4-H clubs responded with enthusiasm. Using the food list as a guide, interested clubs followed through by providing a filled food box when a resource council agency member requested one for a specific family. 4-H'ers and their families donated nonperishable foods and cash for perishable items including eggs, hamburger, and bread. In addition, extension supplied food and nutrition fact sheets and a set of recipe cards for each box. Confidentiality of donors and recipients was ensured, and soon ten boxes and five cash donations with a total value of \$595 had been funded by area clubs. Volunteers were making the project possible, and it happened just in time. The largest factory in Dodge County, once employing 300, now had fewer than 100 workers, greatly increasing the demand for this kind of emergency help. Very real needs were being met, and club members were gaining a deeper understanding, as they pledged their "hands to larger service" and more projects like this one in the future.

—Linda Dietz  
Communication Resources

# Employability seminar encourages new careers

While students across Carlton County were winding up the school year last spring, two adults, Kurt Youngstrand of Cloquet and Cathy Butera of Barnum, were deep in the midst of plans to continue their education.

Both Youngstrand and Butera participated in an employability seminar sponsored by several county agencies. According to Virginia Korte, Carlton County extension agent, over 50 adults participated in the program held in Cloquet.

The program was co-sponsored by Carlton County Community Education, community health, the Agricultural Extension Service, human services, the Cloquet Area Chamber of Commerce, county churches, S.T.E.P., Minnesota Department of

Economic Security, and the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency. The program was available at no charge to any person underemployed or unemployed, seeking a career change or wishing to re-enter the job market.

Youngstrand and Butera are not your typical students. Youngstrand is 39, with 14 years of truck driving and charter bus experience. He is interested in a management position and realized he would need more training to achieve that goal. Last fall, he contacted Curt Jackson, Cloquet community education director, who directed him to the graduate equivalency degree program to begin work on some basic math skills. Youngstrand is currently working on a two-year degree in transportation management at the

Wisconsin Indianhead Technical Institute.

At the age of 50, Butera has also found it helpful to brush up on her math skills and is now ready to begin training to become a licensed practical nurse. She felt the hardest thing about going back to school was "redeveloping study plans." Butera stated, "Lots of people have supported me. I have realized that I am a very special person with many capabilities."

Butera said the employability seminar was a "neat program" and that it helped her "tremendously." It (the seminar) wasn't giving people handouts—it's you'll do the footwork and we'll give you the tools. Youngstrand also mentioned how helpful people have been through the retraining, including the organizations in-

involved with the employability seminar.

Youngstrand and Butera said going back to school at their ages was difficult, but necessary. Butera expressed concerns about the attitude of women going back to school: "Skills through homemaking, farming, and shopping are valuable skills, but we never thought of them that way." About her new career goals, she says, "I'm zestful and excited. I've found the other students warm to me so I didn't feel like an outsider. I wasn't 18 when I went to college, I was 50; and I've got the world by the tail!"

Burton Laine and Virginia Korte  
—Carlton County

## TV saves time and money in 4-H project training

Don't touch that dial; 4-H is on the air! Keith Martikainen, north St. Louis County 4-H extension agent, recently used television to provide project training to 4-H members in northeastern Minnesota counties.

With a \$3,000 innovative program grant from the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service, Martikainen helped develop thirteen television programs on 4-H subjects. The project involved 4-H

state staff members, 4-H members, and volunteers.

Program topics were determined by Martikainen from the results of a survey of 4-H leaders and by talking with other county 4-H agents. Subjects taught on the television programs included foods and nutrition, clothing, home environment, photography, child care, model rocketry, and junior leadership. The programs were filmed and aired by WDSE, pub-

lic television in Duluth.

Martikainen directed the programs and helped select individuals to do the teaching. Program presenters included county 4-H agents from Lake, south St. Louis, and Carlton counties; several state 4-H staff members; plus two 4-H members and volunteers.

"The programs weren't made as a series," said Martikainen, "but produced to stand on their own so they can be reused." Each program followed the most up-to-date materials available to 4-H members, and for programs on photography and junior

leadership, members could later refer to information in 4-H bulletins.

The thirteen programs were also designed to interest young people not currently involved in 4-H.

This creative approach of using television to conduct project training proved a success. By tuning in to a weekly television show instead of attending local meetings, 4-H families saved time and driving expense.

—Burton Laine  
Carlton County

—Greg Doerning  
Communication Resources

## Gibbs Farm hosts 4-H Summer Camp

Nearly 300 Twin Cities metropolitan area youngsters are getting a rural experience—albeit a 19th century one—this summer. They are getting

exposed to farm life by attending the Gibbs Farm 4-H Summer Camp at the Gibbs Farm in St. Paul, a living history museum.

Campers participate in educational activities during the camp's eight one-week sessions. Pioneer crafts, farm living skills, farm chores, animal science work, gardening, food production and preservation, needlecrafts, and nutrition are all part of the camp curriculum. Participants also gain an appreciation and understanding of what life was like for a young person growing up on a farm in the 19th Century, including exposure to the one-room schoolhouse on the farm site.

The campers, all between the ages of 9 and 13, came from five St. Paul and two Minneapolis youth agencies and from Ramsey County 4-H clubs.

The camp is a collaborative effort of several organizations. Joyce Walker, 4-H area extension agent, organized the program with the cooperation of the Ramsey County Historical Society, the University of Minnesota's Agricultural Extension Service, the St. Paul and Ramsey County job training programs, and youth agencies.

Supervision is provided by camp director Scott Creeger, 10 teen leaders employed through the job training programs, and 4-H and historical society volunteers.

Financial assistance for the camp is being provided by the Dayton Hudson Foundation and the H. B. Fuller Corporation.

—Jon Groth  
Communication Resources



Youth from West Side Boys and Girls Club during visit to Gibbs Farm