

Growing numbers reveal Project Support impact

The numbers are impressive. Project Support helped over 6,900 people develop strategies to continue farming. Following contacts with the Minnesota Extension Service, another 1,500 planned to seek off-farm income and 730 decided to move out of farming.

Another 9,400 developed strategies for improved family resource management and 14,300 worked to cope more effectively with stress.

Extension's Project Support started in fall of 1984 to help farm families make hard choices about

the future. Economic impacts have been impressive. For example, the 110 participants in Nicollet County's farm financial management counseling program saved \$610,000 by reducing their principal and interest payments. Cost savings in Nicollet County averaged \$5,500 per participating farmer.

Project Support is also bringing more requests for educational assistance to extension. "Project Support has given us more exposure. As a result, we're getting bombarded with requests from farmers, lenders and government agencies," says Matt

Metz, acting program leader for agriculture in the Southeast District.

"Some agents have done 80 FINLRB programs (see FINPACK article, bottom of page 2) in less than two months. Our work impresses agencies like the FmHA, SCS and ASCS and they want our assistance. And good farmers who are not in serious financial trouble are starting to tell us they want a larger share of our time," Metz says.

"The problem is that the workload of our agents is so heavy that they have no choice

but to let some things go. Every agent I've talked to says the number of calls is way up compared to a year ago. And it's more than Project Support and the mediation project. Requests are coming in larger numbers for agricultural production information—from farm families who didn't work with extension before," he says.

More information on Project Support and other extension educational programs is available from county extension offices. A complete copy of the Project Support Impact Study is available from the Minnesota



Project Support

Extension Service, Office of the Director, 240 Coffey Hall, St. Paul, MN 55108. ■

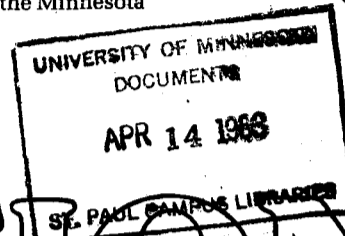
—Jack Sperbeck

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

EXTENOVATIONS

VOL. 7, NO. 2—APRIL 1986

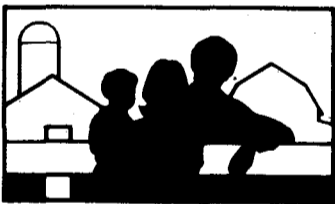
F O R A L L O F E X T E N S I O N



Mediation keeps extension humming

"These are some very special people," says Kathy Mangum. She's describing the 300 Minnesotans who volunteered to be mediators for Minnesota's voluntary farm mediation program.

"The job has no pay, is time consuming and controversial. Some of the volunteer mediators will end up taking money out of



Project Support

their pockets to cover expenses," she adds.

Mangum is coordinator for Project Support, the Minnesota Extension Service program that's working with other state agencies, farm groups and lenders on the mediation project.

The voluntary farm mediation program was initiated by Gov. Rudy Perpich. Its purpose is to bring lenders and borrowers involved in adverse real estate actions together to make decisions about restructuring debts.

The volunteers come from a variety of occupations. They include retired farmers, retired county agents, teachers, business people, attorneys and public officials. The common denominator is that they want to help.

The volunteer mediators were trained by professional mediators at nine training sessions around the state in January. Mediators are neutral. "They don't make decisions like a judge or referee," says Joyce Walker, 4-H extension specialist. Mediators lead and manage the discussion without taking sides and assure that all points of view are heard. The mediator is responsible for keeping things orderly, fair and moving ahead. The lender and borrower have the responsibility



Cindy Bigger, E. Otter Tail 4-H agent (center), practices role playing during a farm credit session. The mediation seminar was held in February in the Earle Brown Center and helped to educate legislators, media and state government representatives.

for making financial decisions and plans.

Extension agents are not serving as mediators. But they are helping prepare farm business plans for the mediation sessions

between the lenders and borrowers. Many counties already have between 50 and 70 requests for mediations. That means an agent has to do that many individual financial planning sessions, on top of an

already crowded schedule.

Someone who's well aware of agent workloads is Matt Metz, acting program leader for

MEDIATION continued on page 3

Extenovations reader survey helpful

Thank you to all of you who took the time to complete and return the recent Extenovations readership survey. The responses, from a randomly selected group of county, state and area staff members, will be helpful in planning future issues and in presenting material that will keep you up-to-date on happenings in extension. In general, I was pleased to find that despite everyone's busy schedules, most of you read at least part of every issue and find new information in each issue. It was also helpful to me and the other Extenovations writers and editors to know how you feel about the content, writing style, layout and photographs in each issue. We will strive to take your comments and suggestions into account as we plan upcoming issues.

Don't forget that Extenovations is truly your newspaper. It is intended to provide a showcase for your achievements, accomplishments and outstanding programs. We appreciate receiving story suggestions from you. Although we can't promise to act on all of them, we will try to use articles and photos that will represent the best of all the good programs going on around the state. So keep those cards and letters coming, folks! Contact me or one of the other Extenovations editors directly or make a story suggestion to the consulting communicator working with your program. Your thoughts and ideas are important to us.

Deedee Nagy
Extenovations Editor

Also, in this issue of

EXTENOVATIONS

Though the farm financial picture continues to be gloomy, FINPACK gives many farmers new hope. Page 2.

Who to call with sensitive problems of debt and family stress? For hundreds it's been the St. Paul campus hotline. Page 3.

Groundwater may not yet be a household word for most Minnesotans. But toxins found in the water supply are changing that. Page 3.

Financial difficulties are only part of the farm problem. Family counseling helps heal emotional pain as well. Page 4.

Finding it tough to deliver educational programs to some parts of the state? High-tech plan may bring these remote areas closer to home. Page 4.

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FINPACK brightens financial future

Brown County farmers advocate FINLRB use

When financial counseling programs began requiring more time from county agents than ever before, Steve Croegaert, agent in Brown County, wanted to know if the time was justified. Beginning last October, Croegaert re-interviewed eight farmers whom he had previously counseled using the farm financial management programs.

What he found was a bright spot in today's farm crisis. The farmers had participated in extension's computerized long-range farm budgeting procedure program known as FINLRB and all said they would recommend it to their relatives and neighbors. Many, in fact, already had.

The eight farmers chosen from more than fifty that Croegaert had worked with represent a cross section of his clientele. They have differing cropping and livestock arrangements and represent three financial levels. Two were well aware of their financial conditions, were good

record keepers and had had even done some sophisticated analysis on their own. Some were not good record keepers, but were managing to hang on. A few were in serious financial trouble.

Once they began working with FINLRB, excitement set in. Some wanted to explore ten alternatives or more, even though the program is designed to play out only three. "So that's how that works!" some exclaimed at learning a new concept. "It got them thinking," says Croegaert, "and that has always been one of our main objectives. They were amazed at some of the things that extension is doing now. They wished that they had these programs a few years ago."

State representative K. J. McDonald, chairman of the House Agricultural Committee, visited Croegaert for a day during the study. "I was amazed that extension had such a counseling program up and running so quickly to meet the farm crisis," says McDonald. Croegaert reports

that McDonald proceeded to bombard him with questions about the use of portable computers and the impact of extension programs.

Adult farm management programs and banks in several communities are also discovering the educational value of extension's FINPACK programs of which FINLRB is one. Six of the farmers used the FINLRB results to work out financial arrangements with their banks. A like number used the program to make decisions about their farming operation such as buying or selling land, increasing livestock enterprises or restructuring loans.

Though many people take it for granted that farmers all know that farm management is important, Croegaert knows from experience that this isn't so. "I can see from this program that many are just now realizing the importance of these farm management concepts," he says. Understanding how cash flow works and why has been the area of most progress.

Typical counseling sessions take from two to three hours. Croegaert has handled over a hundred cases and his average caseload is between 15 and 20 cases per month. Because of the additional burden of FINLRB, he has had to shift some of his former duties to others in the office. So while many farmers have been gaining a new appreciation of extension, Croegaert has been gaining a new appreciation of his co-workers. ■

—Hank Drews

I was amazed that extension had such a counseling program up and running so quickly to meet the farm crisis.

Rep. K. J. McDonald

FINPACK takes guesswork from financial planning

From St. Peter, Minnesota, Gary Hachfeld, Nicollet County extension director, reports positive results from FINPACK. Part of Project Support, FINPACK (for FINancial PACKage) is a farm financial planning aid that comprises four computer programs. Without giving details that might reveal identities, Hachfeld reports how some farmers have made use of FINPACK's merits.

One such case is farmer Elmer who has a 400-plus tillable acre operation. An extremely efficient hog producer, he farrow-to-finishes 350 litters of hogs annually. He ran into debt payment problems which were largely due to a 1982 land purchase costing over \$3,000 per acre. Giving the land back is something he considered, but that would have had serious tax consequences.

With Hachfeld's help, he used FINPACK to analyze the current situation and layout alternatives. Projections were then made of several ways to renegotiate the contract-for-deed against that expensive land, in order to make the necessary operation cash flow. The end result of one plan was a savings from principal and interest payments in excess of \$24,000 annually, which allowed him to keep the farm. They then used the FINPACK printout in successful negotiations with the two landholders as documentation of the farm's potential.

Another case involves a father and son partnership with more complex problems. They had accumulated too much debt in running a diverse livestock and crop production operation on a large amount of land. With FINPACK, Hachfeld and the farmers tried six different scenarios including restructuring debts, looking at different cropping operations, changing interest rates and liquidating some assets.

The program failed these farmers in the sense that they found no



way to service their amount of debt. They had to leave farming, at least temporarily. But it did not fail them in another sense; they were able to leave farming before all of their assets were eroded through declining equity levels.

Hachfeld has counseled more than 160 clients in his role as county agent and specialist in farm financial management and marketing. By using FINPACK in these sessions, he has been able to analyze farm financial conditions, develop new alternatives and check out the effect of different decisions based

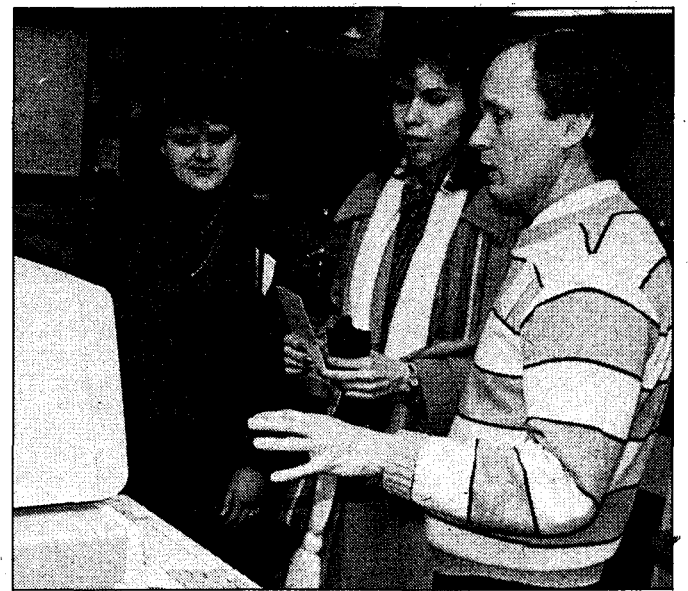
on the family's goals. "In many cases we can help farmers work out of a [bad] financial situation," Hachfeld says with optimism.

He continues, "We've been 100 percent successful in terms of giving a better understanding of their operation ... probably 75 percent successful in terms of being able to restructure debt and that sort of thing, just because some of these individuals have waited too long."

Two points are quite clear says Hachfeld, "If the input data is done correctly, by diligently going through the records for expense levels, debt payments, and that type of thing, the FINPACK printout is very useful documentation. And, if the farmer is involved in the process and understands it, that makes that farmer much more in control. I've seen bankers impressed by a farmer being able to explain what went into and what came out of a FINPACK analysis."

Political ripples from FINPACK's success have been felt all the way from county commissioners to state legislators. Calls to Hachfeld's office over the past year and a half have gone up eight times. Hachfeld says in summary, "We've never had the traffic we are seeing now. And, we are being recognized statewide as a viable, up-front, progressive, anticipatory organization and a good source of reliable, unbiased information." ■

—Hank Drews



William Schafer, extension food technologist, demonstrates a computer program for calculating safe processing times for canning.



Tour guide and former Associate Director, Hal Routh, (left), challenges some County Extension Day visitors to a game of Animals in Pursuit. This new 4-H game was developed by the Minnesota State 4-H Livestock Program Development Committee with support from the Minnesota Livestock Breeders Association. It is designed to teach animal science management and showmanship practices to young people.

Commissioners review progress at County Extension Day

Despite a sloppy, late-winter snow storm, about 300 people from throughout the state attended the annual County Extension Day activities on the St. Paul campus March 13. Among the guests for the tours and special events of the day were several University of Minnesota regents and a number of persons from the university's central administration.

A "first" for this year's event was a morning session spent reporting extension's activities and accomplishments to some 40 county commissioners, who were attending with their local delegations. Campus specialists and county and area agents spoke about such current programs as Project Support, farm mediation activities, the teens in distress effort, FINPACK and the family financial planning program. Participants also took tours of university laboratories and offices to hear explanations of research and extension activities underway.

Mahnomen County agent dies

James Martin, Mahnomen County extension director and agriculture agent, died in late January. Before joining the Minnesota Extension Service in 1978, he was an extension agent in North Dakota for eight years and had also managed a farm and taught farm management at a vocational-technical institute for

several years.

Most recently Martin had been working throughout northwestern Minnesota to help farmers analyze their financial situations with the aid of the extension-developed computer program FINPACK.

EXTENOVATIONS

Vol. 7 No. 2
April 1986

Published bimonthly by the Director's Office, 240 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Ave., University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108.

Managing editor Deedee Nagy
Production editor Richard Sherman
Designer Paul Lee
Photo editor Don Breneman

Produced by Communication Resources, 433 Coffey Hall.

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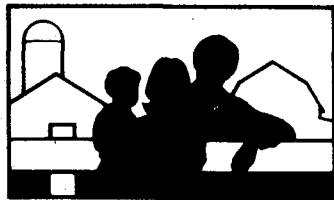
Hotline provides private pipeline to information

A distraught farmer calls with questions about severe cash flow problems and debt restructuring. Its the kind of question many county extension offices have been getting. The difference here is the call comes not into a county office but into the St. Paul campus on the statewide toll free Project Support Hotline.

In the first nine months of operation the hotline has received over 700 calls. Slightly over half of the callers have been male. The calls are answered by agr econ and University Law School graduate students who have received special training in farm management and FINPACK. They offer information and

referral on questions about farm finances and personal or family stress. The hotline is open from 9 to 4:30 Monday through Friday.

The hotline's biggest advantage has been the promise of anonymity. "It's been a good way to link farmers who first of all don't want to admit they are having trouble, second of all don't want to ask for help and third, have never used the kind of resources that they need now," says Kathy Mangum, Project Support coordinator. "Given the sensitive nature of a lot of the financial and stress problems a lot of the farm families were having, some of them would maybe only be willing to



Project Support

establish contact with Project Support if the first contact was anonymous."

For 40 percent of the callers the hotline was their first contact with the extension service, Mangum speculates. "Probably another 40 percent were familiar

with one small portion of extension, like soil testing or county fairs. They didn't know we offer to help in financial planning and financial analysis and stress management," she says.

The goals of the hotline are to link distressed farm families with resources that would help them solve their problems. A family systems approach is used, says Mangum, because financial distress is only one part of a caller's problems. Accerbatng that distress is frequently a breakdown in husband-wife communication, problems with other relatives or bankers involved in the farm operation, and the stress brought on by a lack of basic necessities for the family. Often, Mangum says, the callers need referrals for assistance with employment, food, fuel and medical help. In 90 percent of the cases a referral is made back to the local county extension office for in-depth assistance from county agents.



Photo by Don Breneman

Project Support coordinator, Kathy Mangum, in a typical pose. Since February, Kathy has spent the majority of her time on the phone with farmers and lawyers answering questions about the Voluntary Mediation Project.

advocates and county extension agents, and vo ag instructors and their bankers told them to do, and they are still going to lose the farm."

Mangum notes that there has been a change in the type and complexity of calls received. In the beginning a typical call lasted from 10 to 20 minutes. Now they are lasting from 20 to 40 minutes. "When we started in mid-March we got calls from farmers trying to secure operating loans. Now we are getting calls from farmers struggling with three or four different lenders with complex financial problems. The callers' stress levels are up and they are feeling so angry. Angry that they spent a year doing all the things that we educators, and farm

The hotline's funding runs out the end of June. Its future depends on the kind of funding Project Support receives. Mangum intends to consider its continuation carefully. The hotline has achieved one of its most important goals, she says. "It has helped Project Support gain an identity as a program that's useful. And it has become a central clearing house for farmers needing information on financial, counseling, health and employment, and legal problems." ■

—Jennifer Obst

Mediation keeps extension humming

continued from page 1

agriculture in the Southeast District. "In my 30-plus years with extension I've never seen agents working harder," he says.

"It's not only Project Support and mediation requests. These programs have given extension more visibility with farmers, other government agencies and businesses. Every agent I talk to says there are more requests for all types of farm production, marketing and financial management information," he says.

Many farmers not in serious financial trouble are concerned that extension agents don't have enough time for them, Metz adds. ■

—Jack Sperbeck



Photo by Dave Hansen

Joyce Walker, 4-H extension specialist, participates in the mediation training for volunteers. This session was held in St. Cloud.

Contaminants raise groundwater safety concerns

Groundwater—it's going to equal acid rain and the greenhouse effect as the natural resource concern of the 1990s, says Roger Steinberg, CNRD southeast area agent in Rochester.

It will take a public policy direction of immense magnitude, to adequately deal with all aspects of the groundwater issue, he suggests.

"When we speak of groundwater in southeastern Minnesota, we have to use it interchangeably with surface water because the two intermix so often and so rapidly, especially after heavy rains," he explains. Steinberg accepts a definition of groundwater that includes the total precipitation that may be passing through or standing in the soil and the underlying strata.

Seventy-five percent of the state's water supply is found in karst, a porous limestone bedrock with a thin layer of topsoil which underlies southeastern Minnesota. Just across the border in Iowa where soils are similar, a study found traces of pesticides in half to three-quarters of the wells tested. Research findings of wells studied in Minnesota will be equally startling, Steinberg believes.

Groundwater pollution in the 1980s has gained much media attention and Steinberg expects the focus will be increasingly on what agricultural chemicals appear.

"Chemigation," meaning adding agricultural chemicals to irrigation water, is entering the vocabulary as is

"methemoglobinemia" a mouthful that means inability to use oxygen. Water with over 10 parts per million nitrate-nitrogen can cause this inability in infants.

The danger of methemoglobinemia is one of the reasons for keeping nitrates out of drinking water, "but this is no longer a significant problem because it is a very easy one to recognize and combat," says Steinberg. "Researchers today see nitrates more and more as indicators of surface contamination. Where elevated nitrate levels appear, there may be other more serious pollutants entering the water supply," Steinberg says. There are frequent questions about water's link to cancer, liver and kidney damage and damage to the central nervous system.

Educating the public on what constitutes a problem well will be a big job. For instance, what does parts per million or per billion mean to the ordinary person? How are trace amounts of a pesticide translated in importance? Drilling deeper wells isn't the answer. Wells as deep as 300 feet in Olmsted County have yielded nitrate pollutants.

Protecting groundwater is an issue that cuts across all levels of government. Steinberg hopes management by crisis can be replaced with advance planning. Decentralization of decisionmaking, vogue in the current federal administration, gives states and counties an opportunity to play an important role in groundwater control.

But the health threat has already come to Minnesota. Ironwood Landfill near Spring Valley made headlines when toxic waste drums from Wisconsin, buried in the ground, leaked into water supplies.

Some Minnesota counties have already acted. "Winona County developed its container disposal plan when residents became concerned at finding half full pesticide containers tossed into drainage ditches, ravines and sinkholes," says Steinberg. Goodhue County has done a study of what local government could do to improve water problems.

In summer 1980, the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources and the governor's office directed a task force of state agencies be established to address the problems in southeastern Minnesota. "One of the strong needs they expressed," says Steinberg, "is education as a key factor in solving the problem." Explained a Minnesota extension impact report on *Groundwater: Extension and Public Policy*, "Thanks largely to extension ... everybody working with the groundwater problem in southeastern Minnesota now knows everyone else."

A Citizens League report in early 1986 calls for a comprehensive statewide policy to protect Minnesota's groundwater. The Twin Cities public affairs organization decries the present fragmented crisis-by-crisis approach, saying too many agencies are involved: their count is 12 federal, 14 state and 5 regulatory.

Steinberg and Gene Mousing, Winona County sanitarian, teamed up to do one of the two slide sets on groundwater, available through the Distribution Center, 3 Coffey Hall. It's called *Health Significance of Your Home Water Supply*, CD-SS-2726. Another, CD-SS-1959, available since 1984 and authored by Clifton Halsey (now retired from extension) is called *Groundwater in Southeast Minnesota's Karst Regions*.

Steinberg and Paul Larson, area agent with EXTEND, with help of a USDA grant, are testing computer software they have developed called, "A Record Keeping System and Method of Analysis for Private Farm/Family Wells." It's in keeping with a Community Health Services act passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 1976 giving counties authority and

responsibility for testing individual farm and family wells.

Jim Anderson, extension soil scientist, and Pierre Robert of the Department of Soil Science are developing software called, "Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution Program for IBM-PCs", for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. This program evaluates impacts of agricultural practices on surface water quality in watersheds for single storm events. It's a collaborative effort headed by the Department of Soil Science together with USDA-ARS, Morris, Minnesota and the Soil Conservation Service. The Minnesota Extension Service has entered into a memorandum of understanding for such productions with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. ■

—Mary Kay O'Hearn



Photo by Don Breneman

Roger Steinberg and Arvid Hougium, director of Olmsted County Health Department. Hougium was one of the people interviewed for the slide tape produced by Steinberg and Gene Mousing, Winona County sanitarian.

One-on-one counseling helps Carver couples cope



Photo by Don Breneman

Jeanne Markell, Carver County extension director, discusses plans for supplementing farm income with Tom, Don and Donna Forner, a Waconia farm family.

The individual farm family support program in Carver County is a time consuming, labor intensive process. It has also been very rewarding. And the need for it doesn't show any sign of letting up.

For the past year Carver County agent Vern Oraskovich and home ec agent Jeanne Markell have been involved in one-on-one financial analysis and family stress education efforts with over a hundred farm families.

In the beginning of their efforts for Project Support they had planned more large group meetings on family stress management, "but we found out pretty soon that those were not going to be as effective as we thought and the one-to-one, intense work was really necessary," Markell says.

"We have reached between 100 and 120 families. The majority came first for farm financial help from Vern. Some of them were

previous clients of mine from home study groups or from involvement in 4-H, and they had heard of our willingness to talk about family relationships," she explains.

How does the process work for a farm couple? "A typical case would be a couple who comes to the office to run a financial analysis on their farm. In perhaps the first or second meeting, Vern would begin to uncover some of their other problems such as family relationship problems or difficulties with their children at school, and suggest that I sit in on the next session." After Markell joins Oraskovich and the couple, it becomes a comfortable group process. "Sometimes I follow up individually with them," says Markell. "One couple asked for help on how to tell their children that they were going to file bankruptcy, so I helped them work that through."

Not all couples counseled by Oraskovich and Markell are in immediate financial trouble,

though; some go in to prevent financial problems.

Working with two generations is also common according to Markell. "One mother-in-law came to me and said, 'my two daughter-in-laws are fighting because my sons are in partnership and in financial difficulty. Can you do something?'"

These sessions have benefited couples in many ways, opening communication doors and allowing freer discussion of values. In one case, a couple was discussing whether to build a new livestock facility. That led to a discussion of off-farm income and eventually to a discussion of the values each of them had about employed mothers.

Did the agents find this type of work a revision of their roles? "A lot of people have asked that," Markell says. "For me it didn't feel like a new role, partly because my area of specialization is the family, so this kind of work

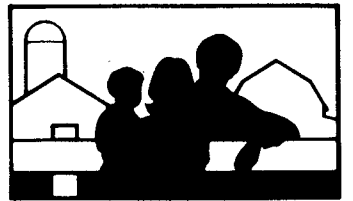
has always been the part of my job I've enjoyed the most. But whereas previously my job entailed a lot more direct skills teaching, Project Support has provided the opportunity and the need to do what I really think is my best skill anyway."

She describes the difference between what she is doing and the professional counselor role. "I don't think I ever let people perceive me nor do I perceive myself, as a counselor-therapist, and I always make that very clear. When the sessions with clients bridge into that need, I involve other professionals. I always try to stress that what we are really doing is educating, it's just that I don't think an educator needs to be in a classroom with a blackboard. I think you can educate in a one-to-one situation where you really are listening, and helping people work through their own dilemmas."

Markell and Oraskovich did not find a great deal of resistance in the farm families to accepting this kind of help. Markell credits Oraskovich for making the transition from financial management to stress management comfortable for their clients. "In most cases there is a barrier, especially for men, in coming for emotional help." Receiving help from the agent can be less threatening.

They did an evaluation of the program last fall with 10 of the families. Using a questionnaire, they spent about an hour and a half with each family—interviewing them in their homes. "People told us it made sense for stress management education to come together as a package with farm financial management education.

And they found it very comforting and convenient to receive it from the county extension office. For some of them it was already a place where they had connections." As one family said during the evaluation, "If we can't turn to a county agent with these kinds of things where can we turn to?"



Project Support

The work has also forged closer relationships for the county agents with other service agencies in the county. For example, the mental health center director has agreed to send counselors to the county office on request, so that a client need not be seen going to the mental health center. "What we are trying to do, after all, is to make people less reluctant to get this sort of help," Markell says. A counselor from the mental health center also takes part in a support group for farm families which meets the first Monday of the month, an offshoot of individual sessions with Oraskovich and Markell.

The daunting result of the success of these efforts has been increasing demands on the agents' time. The need for this kind of help is not slowing down. On the contrary. "Our county has been somewhat insulated from the farm crisis compared to southwest Minnesota, because we are a strong dairy county. Depending on what happens to dairying, it is probably going to get worse before it gets better," says Markell. "Meanwhile our farmers are experiencing that anxiety of wondering what's around the corner. One of the things we are trying to accomplish is to get people to anticipate some of the things that might be down the road a year or two."

As one couple reported learning from the group sessions, you can "change some things and let some things go, and pay some small price, and in the long run you can survive." ■

—Jennifer Obst

On telecommunications

Common interests emerge from Duluth conference

"How can we deliver education to the remote areas of northeastern Minnesota?" That's what Lorilee Sandmann, director of the Northeast District, wanted to know in her effort to reach this traditionally hard-to-reach area of the state.

Hoping to develop telecommunications options and distance video education, Sandmann contacted Linda Bradley, St. Louis County agent. Together they applied for and obtained proposal funding from the new Kellogg-grant-funded Telecommunications Development Center (TDC) to assess the feasibility of their plan. They wanted it to be a cooperative venture with other state organizations and needed to establish that there would be sufficient interest in collaboration.

As it turned out, the Minnesota Extension Service was not the only organization eager to

develop such a system. Independently, school districts, libraries, hospitals, government agencies, business and other higher educational institutions were exploring their telecommunications options and were competing for the same funds to develop systems.

To pull these varied interests together, the TDC and Lancomm Corporation sponsored a 1-1/2 day conference. The conference was held in February in Duluth. Sixty-seven people attended, representing libraries, public school systems, broadcasters, hospitals, AVTIs, community colleges, higher education, telecommunication vendors, private citizens and extension. The conference featured presentations and group discussion.

Participants were surprised to learn how many telecommunications needs they had in common. By the end of the



Photo by Don Breneman

Bob Sopoci, Cook County extension director (center), talks with a representative of Northwestern Bell about the potential of fiber optics. The exhibit was one of the attractions at the extension-sponsored conference on developing telecommunications networks for northeastern Minnesota.

second day, all participants agreed that discussions needed to continue towards a cooperative telecommunications plan. Over half of those present volunteered to serve on a follow-up planning committee.

Bradley will convene the next meeting and use the TDC pre-proposal money to handle the expense of these continued discussions. ■

—Marcia Hyatt

In brief

Jack Morris, Pope County, received the Distinguished Service Award from the Irrigators Association of Minnesota (IAM) at its 1986 convention in St. Cloud in February. The award was presented to recognize Morris's contributions to the development of irrigation in Minnesota.

Dick Hawkins, extension economist, farm management, was one of three specialists from across the country to present information on the farm crisis at the February ES-USDA administrators' staff conference. Hawkins discussed the Center for Farm Financial Management.

Ellen Schuster, EFNEP coordinator, presented a workshop at the EFNEP regional conference in Denver on "Master Planning, Staffing and Innovation in Minnesota EFNEP." The conference was held in late January. Among her exhibits was a poster describing a series of nutrition billboards developed by Linda Bradley, St. Louis County.