EXTENOVATIONS

For All of Extension

MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Vol. 15, No. 2, May 1994

METRO CLUSTER MASTER GARDENERS STAFF GREEN THUMB HOTLINE ON KARE TV

DON BRENEMAN

Master Gardeners from the metro cluster of counties helped answer more than 1,600 calls from homeowners and fellow gardening enthusiasts through the KARE (TV) Green Thumb Hotline, which took viewers' questions for more than two hours each night for a week at the TV studio. Bob Mugaas, Hennepin County educator, at right, accompanied a group of eight volunteers to the KARE studios on the first night of the hotline. The effort was coordinated by Mary Meyer, new state Master Gardener coordinator, and Dani O'Reilly, MES public relations leader. MES educators in the cluster, Mugaas, Dave Whiting of Ramsey, Harvey Buchite of Anoka, Vern Oraskovich of Carver and Dave Resch of Scott, enlisted the 37 Master Gardeners representing all the counties in the cluster for the service. Viewer response was so overwhelming during the week that KARE asked the Master Gardeners to return for an "encore" May 23-25.

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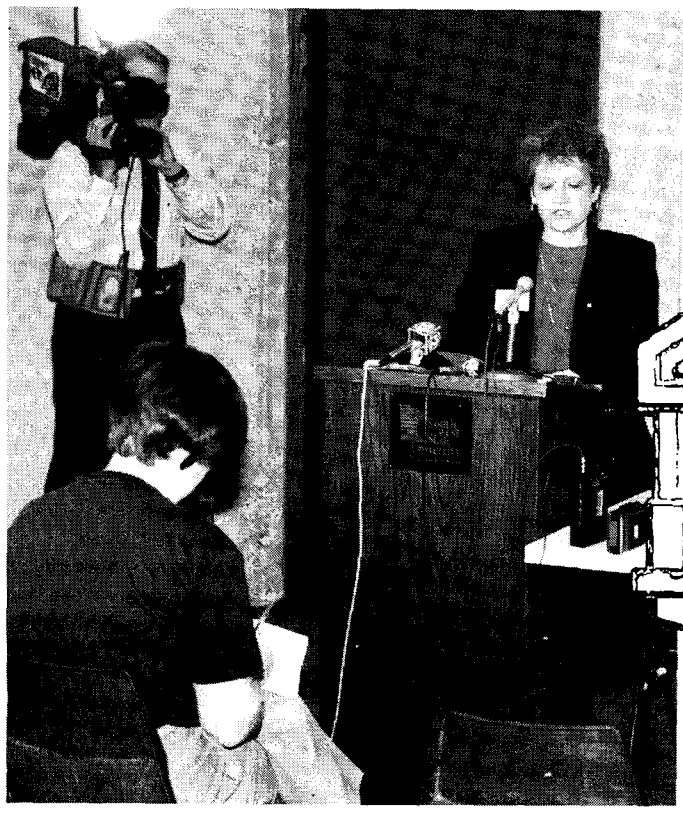
For All of Extension MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE *Vol. 15, No. 2, May 1994*

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

MES EDUCATORS TAKE CLOSER LOOK AT GAMBLING'S IMPACT ON FAMILIES, CHILDREN IN SW MINNESOTA



MARTIN MOEN

Extension educator Shirley Anderson, Lyon County, helped release results of the 1993 Southwest Minnesota Gambling Survey at a news conference in Marshall.

Gambling is a $4 billion dollar industry in Minnesota. Casinos such as Jackpot Junction in Morton account for a large share of that economic activity.

Who is gambling in Minnesota?

Numerous surveys have shown that nearly every Minnesota adult has gambled at some point in their life. But, you and I only do a little gambling—a lottery ticket here, a pull-tab there. What people like us spend on legalized gambling is substantial, but the casinos and state lottery would lose money if they depended on us. So, who is spending all the money on gambling?

"It is the mom, the housewife—it is the secretary, the professional person—it is the dad," says Roselyn Biermaier, extension educator in Yellow Medicine County. "These are real people causing a lot of real pain among family members."

Biermaier continues, "As a human being it's difficult to see people suffer and not do anything about it. As an educator, I can help people understand the choices they make when they gamble."

"We're not telling people they shouldn't gamble," says Shirley Anderson, extension educator in Lyon County. "We're helping them think through the potential dangers involved in deciding to gamble. What people ultimately decide to do is their business."

Anderson, Biermaier and Sandy Syverson, extension educator in Jackson County, recognized several years ago the impact gambling was having on families in southwest Minnesota. They teamed with researchers at Southwest State University in Marshall to determine the extent of the problem.

The 1992 Southwest Minnesota Gambling Survey confirmed their belief that a lot of people were experimenting with gambling. A few, 1.8 percent, were experiencing gambling-related problems such as not paying bills, hiding overdue bills, or borrowing money from family and friends to keep gambling. At the same time, Anderson, Biermaier and Syverson learned that adults weren't the only ones gambling.

"I would visit high schools," Biermaier says, "and kids would all claim they didn't have a problem with gambling. But as we got further into the discussion, a few began to realize that maybe it isn't much fun to owe a friend $20 because the football team lost a game."

A Gambling Curriculum

The three extension educators wrote a curriculum for students in grades six through nine—an age when they felt kids were just beginning to think about gambling. Through a series of lessons students learn about gambling; its history, the positive and negative effects of gambling, and what constitutes compulsive gambling behavior. The curriculum was an immediate success.

Norma Sletten, a teacher at Marshall Senior High School, used the curriculum with juniors and seniors in her class. "They weren't real receptive to the idea that what they were doing might have some harmful consequences." The response isn't stopping Sletten, however.

"They need to be aware of the issues involved in the gambling decisions they make—the curriculum brings those things to the surface."

Nadine Wickersham, an elementary teacher in the Winnebago school district, says kids in her sixth grade class enjoy the curriculum. "It brings the real world into the classroom. They've seen adults gamble, seen the television commercials. The discussions facilitated by the curriculum are very relevant for them," Wickersham says.

Public schools aren't the only places where the curriculum has been used. Corlys Knudson, a parish worker at First Lutheran Church in Marshall has included it in her confirmation classes. "Kids have seen their parents gamble, even their grandparents in some cases. The family environment now includes gambling, and some of those families have a problem because of it," Knudson says. "The curriculum is very relevant and it helps our church get involved in this issue."

The curriculum is in use in school districts throughout Minnesota. Educators in North Dakota are adapting it for use in that state as well.

Next Steps

A follow-up survey, conducted in 1993, found the number of people who have a gambling problem is growing in southwest Minnesota. The survey found that nearly 5,500 adults (2.5 percent) in a 21 county area of southwest Minnesota could have a gambling problem. "If that's accurate," Anderson says, "we've got a tremendous challenge ahead of us." Current statewide estimates are that the number of people with a gambling problem is expected to peak at about 4 percent in four to five years.

Anderson, Biermaier and Syverson plan to write a new curriculum for younger students. "Even sixth graders have formed an opinion about gambling," Anderson says. "If we can reach them before that occurs, perhaps we'll make them more cautious about experimenting with gambling—at least until they're better able to handle the consequences of gambling."

Their work has gained recognition as well. Not only have media in southwest Minnesota been attentive to the gambling issue, national media are also following the story. Most recently a reporter from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation visited the area interviewing teachers and students about the curriculum. And their work may be included in an upcoming edition of the PBS series "Frontline."

As for the surveys, they'll continue if funding is available.

Martin Moen

1993 Southwest Minnesota Gambling Survey Results

- **2.5 % reported behaviors that would classify them as Probable Pathological Gamblers**
- **91% of this group reported gambling more than they intended**
- **82% reported arguing with others about how they handle money**
- **73% had been criticized for their gambling or been told they had a problem**
- **Overall respondents opposed legalizing video poker in Minnesota bars by a margin of 2.5 to 1**
- **They supported raising the legal gambling age to 21 by a 4 to 1 margin**

Most popular form of gambling:
- **Casinos**

Least popular form of gambling:
- **Playing the stock market**

Surveys were sent to 1,504 households in a 21 county area of SW Minnesota. Analysis is based on the 445 surveys (29.6%) that were returned.

COUNTY EXTENSION DAY SHOWCASES HOW MES IS 'TAKING THE INITIATIVE'

More than 350 people participated in County Extension Day, March 18, on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. This year's theme, Taking the Initiative, focused on community issues and current collaboration among MES staff and partners throughout the university and in community organizations and other governmental agencies.

Workshops on children, youth and families, food safety, flood response, precision farming, water quality, tourism and other current initiatives ran throughout the day. Participants could also take tours or watch demonstrations and videos on the latest MES programs and collaborations.

Photos by Don Breneman and Deedee Nagy

▲ **Among the MES staff attending County Extension Day with accompanying county participants were, from left, Larry Tande, southeast district director; Kathy Olson, Goodhue County MES educator, and Toni Smith, Wabasha County MES educator.**

▲ **Gary Wyatt, Watonwan County MES educator, explains some material on a County Extension Day display to a participant in the day's events.**

▲ **Carl Rosen, MES soil scientist, told County Extension Day visitors about new ways to manage nitrogen in potato operations to reduce the potential for nitrate leaching and water pollution.**

◀ **Among the distinguished guests at County Extension Day were Nobel Prize-winning scientist Norman Borlaug, left. He visited with University Regent William Hogan and Dani O'Reilly, MES public relations leader.**

PERSONAL POWER VIDEO CONFERENCE DRAWS 3,000 TO 135 SITES

DON BRENEMAN

More than 18 months of planning and work by MES support staff culminated in the satellite video conference "Journey to Personal Power" which attracted about 3,000 participants at 135 sites in MES offices and across the country. MES staff who coordinated the video conference were, from front to back, Chery Hays, Sue Jarosak and Lee Perry. Janet Hagberg, author of the book Real Power, hosted the live, interactive conference dealing with leadership and empowerment. Funding for the video conference came from a MES innovative grant, the University Commission on Women and the office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs, Ettore Infante. EDS video staff member Rich Reeder produced the video conference.

MES AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS HELP CARVER COUNTY'S WACONIA LOOK TO FUTURE

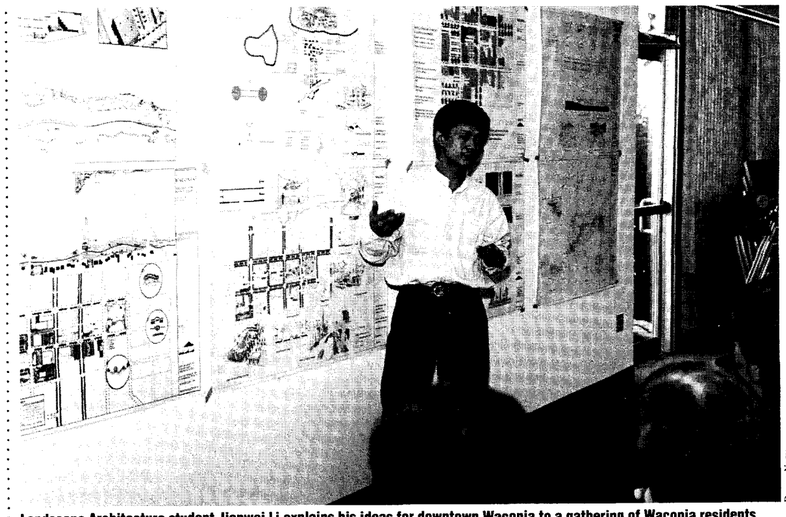
Waconia is a town of 4,000 with an eye on the future, thanks in part to landscape architecture students from the University of Minnesota and the efforts of Nancy Lenhart, Carver County extension educator, and Roger Clemence, MES collegiate program leader with the College of Architecture and Landscape Architecture.

During winter quarter, 13 students from Roger Martin's landscape architecture class, "Design of a Gathering Place," got to know Waconia well. They spent time in the community, which is about an hour's drive west of Minneapolis, and talked with a wide variety of residents about their concerns and hopes for Waconia.

At the end of the quarter they presented their visions for the town to meetings that Lenhart organized for interested Waconians. A summary booklet outlining each student's ideas and drawings is now in the hands of civic leaders, including the community development committee Waconia Horizons, who will decide what changes to explore further and how they should come about.

Students went beyond the scope of the original assignment and made many suggestions that involved not only downtown Waconia but also the lake frontage, historic areas, schools and access to nearby Minnesota Highway 5, the main thoroughfare serving the community. They proposed tree, shrub and flower plantings; better signage, banners and awnings; outdoor seating; widened sidewalks; improvements in parking and even a recommendation for a small lakefront hotel.

"Students don't often get this kind of opportunity to research a community thoroughly and present their ideas to an audience of civic leaders," said Roger Clemence. "We got tremendous feedback from the students about what they learned. There are wonderful spinoffs that come from a project like this. The students benefit, and their ideas spark interest in the community so there's widespread involvement and the chance for many winners."



DEEDEE NAGY

Landscape Architecture student Jianwei Li explains his ideas for downtown Waconia to a gathering of Waconia residents at the Carver County Extension Service office.

Clemence explained that the Waconia connection began about a year ago when Tom Whitlock, a 1993 landscape architecture graduate, did his senior thesis on uses for Coney Island in Lake Waconia. Lenhart and El Vaughn Williams of the Waconia Horizons group picked up on Whitlock's proposals and involved Randy Cantrell and Barbara Lukermann from the Humphrey Institute, who turned to Clemence and Martin for help with further design suggestions for the downtown. Clemence credits Lenhart with being the linch pin of the project through her community liaison work. She informed community members about what was happening through the news media, organized meetings, served as a resource and arranged for Clemence and others to talk about the students' suggestions with business and fraternal groups in Waconia.

"The effort was exciting, and we believe it has raised good questions for the community to consider as it seeks strategies for the future," Clemence said.

Deedee Nagy

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Vol. 15, No. 2 **May 1994**

Extenovations is published bimonthly by the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Extension Service, Director's Office, 240 Coffey Hall, and produced by the Educational Development System, 405 Coffey Hall, 1420 Eckles Avenue, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108.

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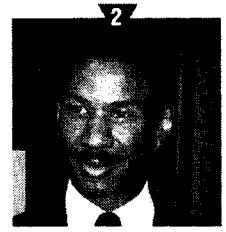

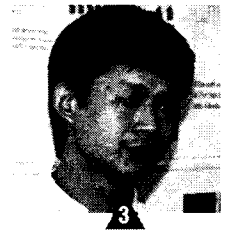

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