MINNESOTA EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

EXTENOVATIONS

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Star Tribune features Extension -- 'Drought brought an endless summer'

(Editor's note: The following article appeared in the Twin Cities' Star Tribune in August, spotlighting Extension's response to the drought and heat of the past summer. We thought you would enjoy reading it. It is reprinted with permission of the reporter, Howard Sinker.)

The drought's impact struck Mark Seeley on one of those hot June afternoons that turned summer into a melting pot of weather records and damage control. Seeley, a University of Minnesota climatologist, had journeyed to Waseca County for a session with farmers who were praying that into their lives, a little rain must fall.

"I knew many of these people were hoping I'd give them a good, positive message," Seeley said. "I didn't. I couldn't. All I could hear was, 'Oh, there goes Dr. Gloom-and-Doom.' They wanted to know if it was going to get better and I told them we never get better in July. Why would it happent his year? I could just see everyone there with their heads down, kicking at the dirt.

"That was depressing. It took me a couple of days to get over that."

Through its extension service and other offices, particularly those on the St. Paul campus, the university has spent a frustrating, yet interesting summer.

The lack of rain has destroyed crops, and hindered research at the six experiment stations across the state, ruining some projects and delaying completion of others. But it has also given agricultural experts a rare opportunity to apply their knowledge on drought-related topics.

"In the long run, we're looking for average conditions under which to do research," said Richard Anderson, superintendent of the Southern Experiment Station in Waseca. "So the drought interferes with the normal process, no doubt about it.

"But if we can't learn from this, something is wrong. Not that I want to have another one."

The waseca station will lose about $110,000 worth of crops that would have been sold to help meet operating expenses. Another experiment station in Morris spent $67,000 on seed, fertilizer and other production costs "for which our return is going to be negligible," said Superintendent Richard Vatthauer. "We're having the same losses and making the same decisions as our clientele.... There are some significant research programs that we won't be able to do." Other schools have faced similar problems.

Researchers at Purdue University in Indiana lost plots of corn and soybeans valued at more than $2 million, according to a report in the Chronicle of Higher Education. The University of Georgia sold several hundred cattle instead of using them to test grazing materials. Barren fields forced a University of Illinois agronomist to drop about $40,000 worth of research on tillage and fertilization practices.

At Morris, as a result of the crop failures, Vatthauer said he's already needed to spend about $23,000 "replacing forage that we would have normally produced ourselves, and we're still that much short." The experiment stations allow professors and graduate students to do field research on crops and livestock, the midpoint between laboratory science and farming practice.

The drought has created an endless demand for information from professors and county extension agents, much of it needed yesterday. Extension offices, located in every Minnesota county, served about 644,000 people in 1987 — more than 15 percent of the state's population — and have been busier this year, owing to the extreme conditions.

Said Jim Zimmerman, who farms near Waseca, "They can't do a rain dance but they can help us prepare for the future."

A university home economist in Clay County established programs for social service personnel in the Fargo-Moorhead area who have little knowledge of farm economics. Rural clergy, many of whom have urban backgrounds, were invited to learn the basics of

- DROUGHT continued on page 4

Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

Shriveled corn fields under a sky whose clouds never yielded rain — this scene typifies the conditions that challenged Extension during the summer just past.

Extenovations Photo by Don Breneman

4-H Junior Leaders negotiate for food at peace luncheon. About 350 4-H Junior Leaders got a unique perspective on the relationship between the amount and distribution of the world's food supply at a world peace luncheon held on the campus of Hamline University in June. The Junior Leaders were divided into groups representing various countries. Food for the picnic lunch was divided between the "countries" based on the actual food resources of that country within the world. Groups then selected United Nations mediators from within their ranks to negotiate for them for more equitable distribution of the food resources. 4-H specialist Dave Pace said the peace luncheon is one way for the Junior Leaders to experience first-hand some of the problems with the distribution of resources between developed and third world countries. After the negotiating exercise ended, the participants were challenged to redistribute the food as evenly as possible, according to Pace.

Also in this issue of EXTENOVATIONS

Teaching the fine art of hospitality

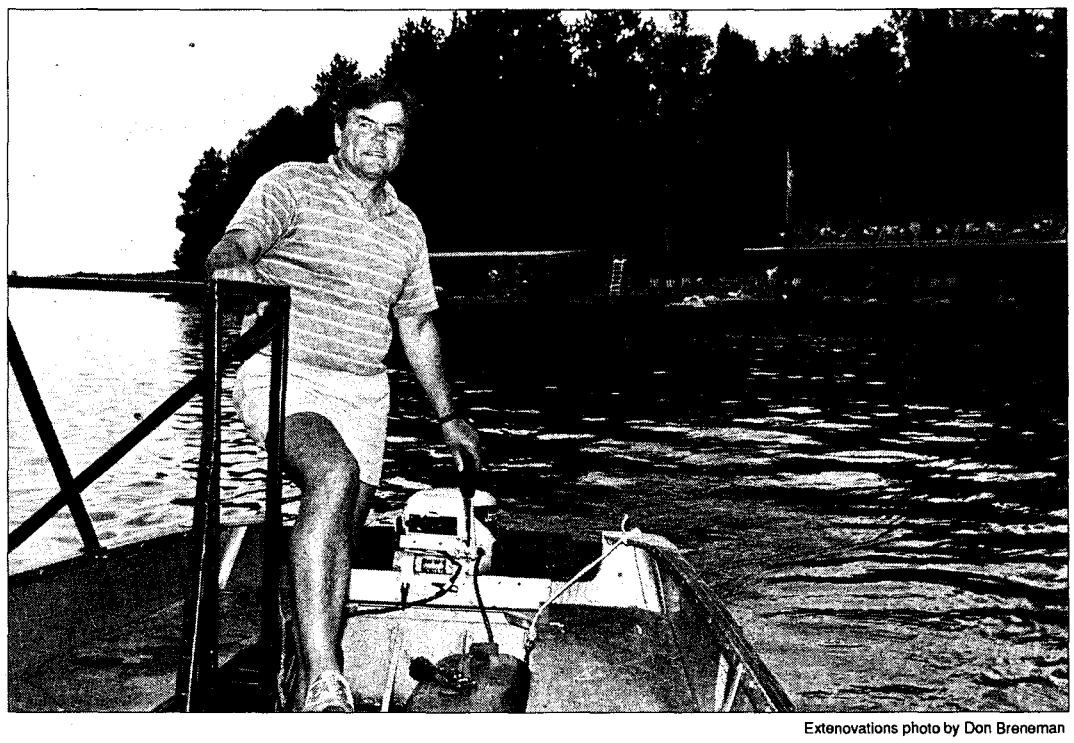
Think about your last vacation. Will you go back there again?

If you return to the same spot, your decision probably won't be due to the scenery alone. Travel agency posters and brochures may lure you to a vacation resort, but usually aren't enough to get you back.

When people travel, what do they want? The answer, according to Jim Connolly, extension communication specialist from the Department of Rhetoric, is "They want to be well treated." During National Tourism Week in May, Extension hosted an "Explore Minnesota Hospitality" teleconference to promote tourism in the state. The teleconference was the only such educational effort attempted anywhere in the nation for the benefit of resort owners and related businesses. A videocassette developed from the teleconference is now available and may help tourism-related businesses capture the hospitality factor so critical in the competitive tourism industry.

In the video, Connolly introduces a panel that includes Connie Balcom, creator and owner of the Hello Minnesota store; Mark Ludlow, owner of Ludlow Island Lodge on Lake Vermillion; and Anne Hittler Grover, manager of marketing for the ValleyFair amusement park. Dave Allison, hospitality consultant from Duluth, moderates the panel.

Simulations of tourists dealing with car rental agents, hotel clerks, waiters, and others are presented. Some scenes show the person-to-person friendliness that can make the customer's experience one to remember while others show the kind of poor treatment that can make the customer too annoyed to forget. Ludlow, who developed a course titled "How to Start a Small business" for the University's General College, recommends this video to those who want to train their employees in the art of hospitality. Employees need to see more than a video, however; if the lesson is to sink in, the business proprietors must practice the hospitality they preach to their employees, says Ludlow. "As proprietors of a small business, our genuine enthusiasm about being of service to customers is the first step in transmitting good customer relations to the people who work for us," he says. In one part of the video, tourists discuss some of their personal travels to indicate what made for a good experience or something to chalk up to experience. Word-of-mouth advertising from well-treated tourists to their friends can drum up future business, and the video gives a glimpse of what some tourists are saying. One woman gives an account of how her family was treated on their way home from a ski trip. They arrived at a restaurant about quarter to five, but the restaurant wasn't scheduled to open until five o'clock. Though the tables were already set up, the family wasn't allowed to come in from the cold. After about 10 minutes they left and drove to the next town where they spent more than $100 at another restaurant. The restaurant that left them out in the cold will not see them again.



Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

Mark Ludlow, resort owner and a contributor to the video on customer relations, says small courtesies can spell the difference between satisfied customers and disgruntled ones who may never frequent a resort or restaurant again. As a resort owner himself, he offers tips on hospitality that are based on first-hand experiences.

Sometimes it is the customers who are unreasonable, of course, and Allison injects a note of caution for those who think that good treatment will satisfy everyone. While the great majority of customers can be won over by hospitality, there are exceptions. Angry or hostile customers make up approximately 2-3 percent of the population, he estimates. No one likes dealing with them, but Allison presents techniques that can make it easier. Though the methods probably won't reform the chronically angry customer, they will often help solve the immediate problem, minimize the customer's hard feelings, and preserve the dignity of those who must wait on them.

Anyone wishing to purchase or rent the video should contact the Distribution Center, 3 Coffey Hall, St. Paul campus, (612) 625-8173. Ask for item number CD-VH-3536, "Exploring Minnesota Hospitality: Customer Relations Training for the Visitor and Retail Industry." ■

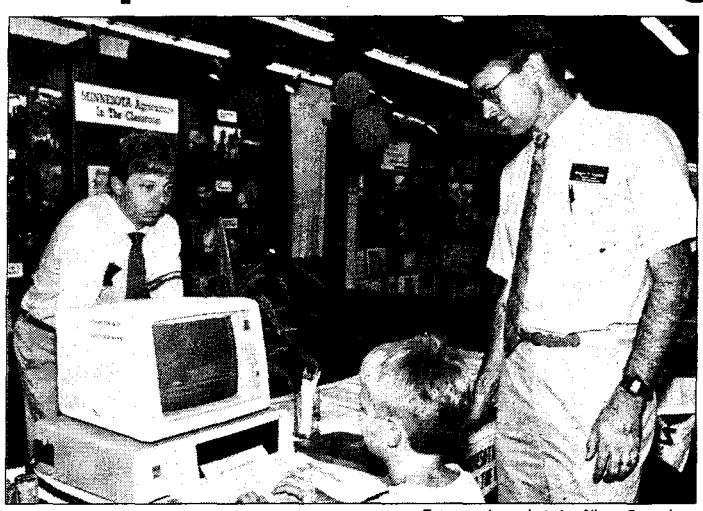
- Rich Sherman

Extension cooperates in kids' agriculture magazine

Sixth graders in Minnesota may know more about agriculture than many of their elders—thanks to Minnesota Agriculture Magazine beginning its third school year of publication.

The Ag Mag, as it is popularly called, is sent to every school in Minnesota with a sixth grade (more than 1,200) with a copy to each student (some 62,000).

"The magazine is a cooperative effort of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and many agriculture and education related organizations," says Al Withers, program director for Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (M-AITC), which produces the 8-page Weekly Reader format magazine. Anyone who picks up the magazine and reads the picture credits knows many are loaned from the Minnesota Extension Service. But what may not be known is that the College of Agriculture is a $10,000 contributor (two years in a row) to the project and that Greg Hutchins, 4-H state program leader, and Keith Wharton, acting dean of agriculture, are members of the M-AITC board of directors. Wharton also serves on the planning committee and Vernon Cardwell, professor of agronomy and plant genetics, is on the magazine's review committee. Interim University President Richard Sauer was on M-AITC's first board and was instrumental in assuring ongoing support from the University. It appears to be a mutually satisfactory cooperation between University and state agencies. Says Withers, "I can pick up the phone and get support across the board from the many university professors, specialists and leadership. That type of cooperation is very much appreciated and needed." Thirty-two contributors from the private sector added some $55,000 to M-AITC during fiscal year 1987-88, and there is a goal of $68,500 to try to meet for the 1988-89 fiscal year. Jim Hield of Cargill heads the M-AITC board.



Extenovations photo by Alison Cummings

Al Withers (behind the computer) of the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom magazine helps a young State Fair goer with a computerized quiz about agriculture's role in the state. Looking on is 4-H program leader Greg Hutchins who serves on the board for the magazine geared toward the state's sixth graders.

"All states are involved to some degree with Ag in the Classroom since an initiative in 1981 from USDA. Colorado Reader targets fourth graders, for instance," Withers explains.

Teachers' enthusiasm about the Ag Mag (which includes a teacher guide) came through in evaluations received with each issue. Some comments: "Excellent magazine as teaching device for city children. The discussion went on for an hour longer than planned." "It's great—the kids and I learned lots!" "This was a big help as our books are outdated." "I enjoy using it for students who are far removed from farm life or agricultural information. It's amazing to observe how some farm children are uninformed." Still others said they encouraged sixth graders to take the magazine home to share it with their family.

Ag Mag is written by a team of experienced educators and educational materials developers who remember to relate to

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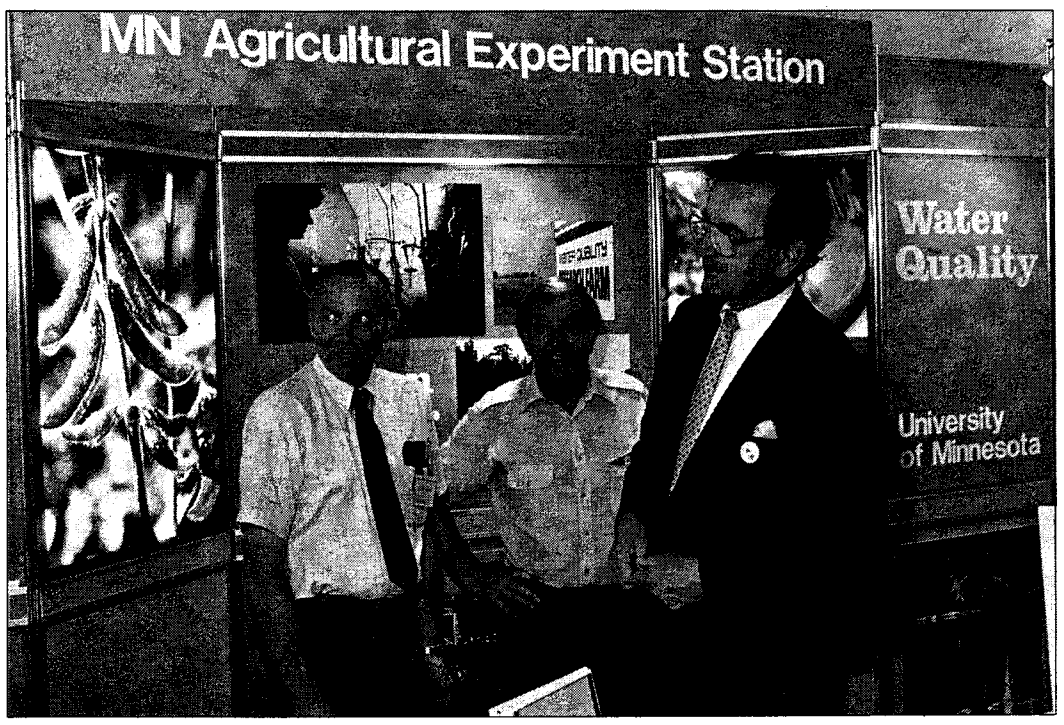
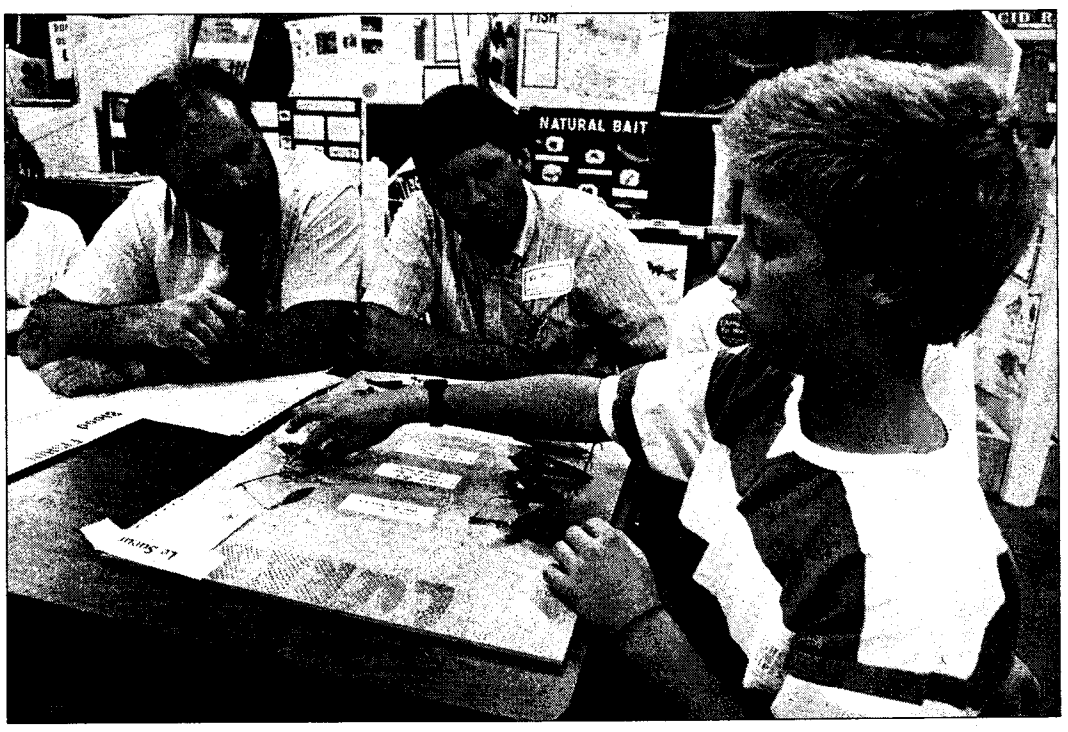
Extension at the Minnesota State Fair

A photo scrapbook



Agriculture Program Leader Duane Schrader and District Director Joe Fox show Governor Rudy Perpich the Extension and Experiment Station display which featured water quality efforts.

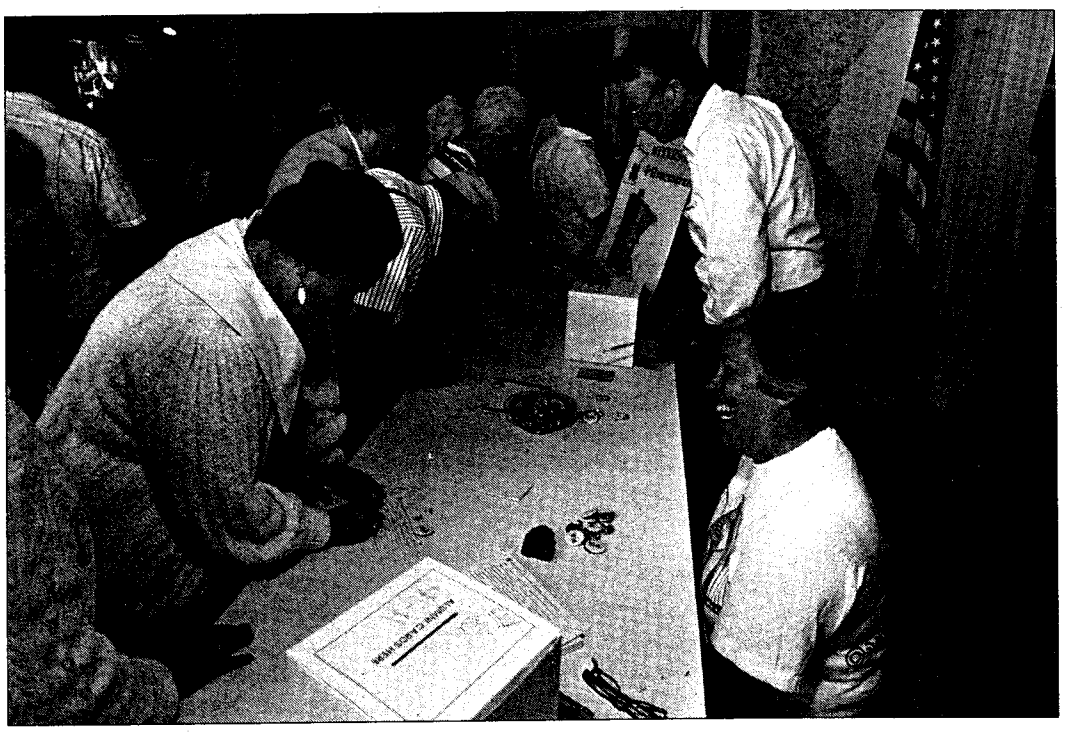
Lieutenant Governor Marlene Johnson, a 4-H alumnus, helped hand out some ribbons to young winners at the Fair.



Bob Sopoci and Ed Mays examine Nathan Cram's exhibit of fishing lures at the Minnesota State Fair.

Patricia Stumme, Freeborn County home economics agent, and Director Pat Borich in the State Fair booth, located in the 4-H Building.

Gregory Schemmel of Pipestone explains the working of a flintlock firing mechanism to judge Bill Stevens. Gregory's exhibit was in the 4-H shooting sports program.



Jeanette and Dwayne Nelson from Stillwater spent a busy afternoon registering 4-H alumni in the west entrance of the 4-H building during the Minnesota State Fair. Between 5,000 and 6,000 former 4-Her's signed in and placed a pin designating their hometown on the map.

Extenovations photos by Don Breneman and Alison Cummings.

State Fair honors Arthaud for 25 years of service

The 1988 edition of the Minnesota State Fair marked a milestone for Ray Arthaud, University of Minnesota extension beef cattle specialist.

Arthaud completed 25 years as open class cattle superintendent at this year's fair. During his tenure, Arthaud has administered the showing of some 50,000 cattle by approximately 8,000 exhibitors.

The Minnesota State Fair Board of Governors presented a plaque to Arthaud at this year's fair in honor of his many years of service.

Extenovations photo by Don Breneman

Ray Arthaud received a plaque at this year's Minnesota State Fair in honor of his 25 years of service as open class cattle superintendent at the fair.

This was actually the 30th state fair cattle show in which Arthaud has been involved. He served as assistant superintendent of the cattle show for five years before taking over the head job.

Arthaud's role as superintendent is primarily that of an administrator. Each year when the fair ends, he begins preparations for the next year, gathering recommendations for changes and improvements. Shortly thereafter, he starts contacting and hiring judges.

He estimates he's hired more than 400 judges over the years. "I've probably hired more cattle judges than anyone in the country," he said.

In May he begins hiring the crew of about 40 people he will need to work during the fair. Many of those he hires are University of Minnesota students.

During the fair, Arthaud is assisted by six dairy superintendents and four beef superintendents. These people take care of such duties as identifying and registering entries and clerking shows. He is also assisted by an office manager and a person who takes charge of the milking parlor.

"Thousands have come by and watched the milking demonstrations," said Arthaud. "It presents a much better image of the dairy industry for visitors to the barn. It's also an advantage for the cows."

Arthaud's responsiblities do not directly involve the 4-H and FFA portion of the cattle show. However, he is in charge of the dormitory used by the young people, and they use the milking parlor.

Although his work days usually run 14 hours long during the fair, Arthaud enjoys his time there. "I associate with a lot of really nice people," he said. "Many come back year after year—it's like old home week. Now some of the people coming in are sons and daughters of people I associated with in the early years." ■

- Joe Kurtz

Hurricane Gilbert victims turn to Extension publications

Some Minnesota extension publications are helping helping victims of Hurricane Gilbert which hit the tiny Yucatan Peninsula island called Isla Mujeres near the resort community of Cancun. Rats, cockroaches, mosquitos and diseases such as typhoid, cholera, severe diarrhea, and pink eye became immediate problems.
Extension's part began with a phone call from Toni Slemmons of Golden Valley to her friend Wenda Moore, a University of Minnesota regent. Moore called the University hospital where Sally Howard, health sciences director of public relations, began alerting others. Howard called the office of Gene Allen, acting vice president and dean of the Institute of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics, where Leslie Miller, senior secretary, alerted Sam Brungardt, news coordinator for Educational Development System. Then there were calls to Mark Ascerno, extension entomologist, and Jim Kitts, extension wildlife specialist. Brungardt supplied news releases originated by Bill Schafer, extension food technologist, after Minnesota's July 1987 flooding rains: "Is Produce from Flooded Gardens Safe to Eat?" and "Exercise Extreme Caution with Flood-Contaminated Foods." Ascerno provided information on mosquito control and Kitts on control of Norway and Roof rats and mice. According to Slemmons, these publications and news releases are now on Isla Mujeres being used by English-speaking residents and being translated to Spanish as needed. ■

- Mary Kay O'Hearn

Extension cooperates in magazine

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their readers with information such as: "One beef cow produces enough hamburger for 1500 quarter pounders. How many pounds is that?" There are even jokes and crossword puzzles.

All Minnesota Extension offices receive copies of each Ag Mag and teacher guide throughout the year. Their staffs are encouraged to followup locally, checking with teachers and principals to see if the materials are being used and to offer their own expertise as additional classroom resources.

M-AITC is beginning to offer (on a pilot project basis) free, school-based teacher in-service workshops and its new 97-page "Minnesota Guide to Educational Resources About Agriculture" has been distributed free to all community and school libraries. It is available on request from the M-AITC office at 90 West Plato Boulevard, St. Paul 55107.

The computer quiz (pictured) at the state fair was concocted by Bob Craven and Jay Yates, assistant extension specialists in farm management. Geared to the public (not just sixth graders), the quiz asked 10 questions, computed the individual's score and gave some ag facts to ponder between questions. The booth with its quiz attracted kids, but plenty of teachers and 4-H agents dropped by besides. ■

- Mary Kay O'Hearn

Extension responds to drought and heat of summer

- continued from page 1

agriculture at the university's experiment station in Lamberton. After initial reports of spider mites attacking soybeans in two counties, specialists in St. Paul prepared information that wa available statewide by the time they became a major problem.

The Dial-U telephone service reported a 25 percent increase in calls last month, most people in the metro area with quesitons about the effects of watering restrictions. The service printed a pamphlet addressing the most common concerns. The first printing was 5,000; about 35,000 have now been distributed. A 12-page tabloid addressed an assortment of drought issues including nitrate testing for silage, water conservation and family stress.

"When you have a drought that affects almost every facet of agriculture, if that's not going to pull us together, nothing is." Seeley said. "This has been a year that we've had occasion to use a lot of the experience and education we've accumulated over the years."

The University established a drought response team in June that took inventory of problems around the state to decide on the most effective responses. Most long-range programs were put aside and plans for the coming year delayed.

"The fear I had was that we're part of an academic environment where being thoughtful, steady and contemplative is the mode," said Pat Borich, extension service director. "I wondered if we could respond quickly, but that's where my pride comes in, because we have."

Said Larry Zilliox, an extension agent in Douglas County: "First we had to convince farmers that the drought was here and going to continue and that they had to create some priorities. The complexity of the problems has changed all summer."

At one point, Zilliox appealed to area veterinarians for mailing lists and the local technical institute for copying services so he could send 25-page packets on livestock management to area dairy farmers. He's also been a frequent guest on TV and radio stations in central Minnesota, earning a reputation for accurate and timely information, accroding to the editor of a weekly newspaper in Alexandria.

"We've been hesitant to paint too bleak of a picture, that's why we rely on people like Zilliox to give us the straight story," said Hollan Lommen, editor of the Lake Region Echo., "He hasn't pulled any punches about how bad the situation is with certain crops. We don't need to make two other phone calls to find out if what he's saying is accurate."

Said Zilliox: "For about a three-week period around the 4th of July, I was on the phone from 9 in the morning until 3 in the afternoon. I'd be on one line, another would buzz and the secretary would have a third holding. Once that happened and there were also three people at the door waiting to talk. We're still getting a number of calls.

"You get calls at home in the evening and calls on weekends. You don't say, 'The office is closed.' The only way you can avoid it is to leave town but there's a sense of commitment to the community. I know there are individuals who need advice, and I'm the resource they can call for help."

Nancy Johnson, a county home economist based in Moorhead, said she received enough queries from social agencies that the university sponsored a training session on financial management and budgeting geared toward farm families. The experiment station in Morris is now answering questions about preparing fields for next year's crops.

"It's August and I can't believe where the time has gone," Johnson said. "Summer must have flown by so quickly because of all the questions and concerns that have come into the office. I feel like it should be June and, at the same time, we're about to gear up for our fall programming." Said Vatthauer: "You dwell on the negative and you can get really down. We have to work on that. After all, we're looking at conditions that nobody has seen since the 1930s. So when you ask, 'Is our research totally lost?' No, it isn't. We'll see some things that we haven't seen for 50 years. So we'll see some things that are valuable, even if the application is limited. I hope it's limited." ■

- Howard Sinker
(Minneapolis) Star Tribune