

# *CREATING **CREDi**ble PUBLIC VALUE STORIES*

Allison Nichols – West Virginia University Extension

Mary Simon Leuci – University of Missouri Extension

Paul Lachapelle – Montana State University Extension

Scott Chazdon – University of Minnesota Extension

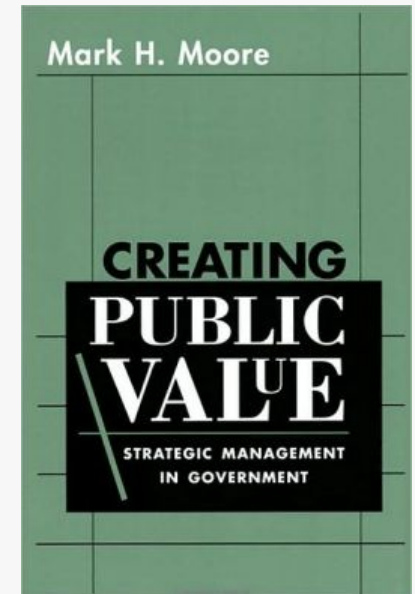
*2015 NACDEP Conference*

*May 18, 2015*

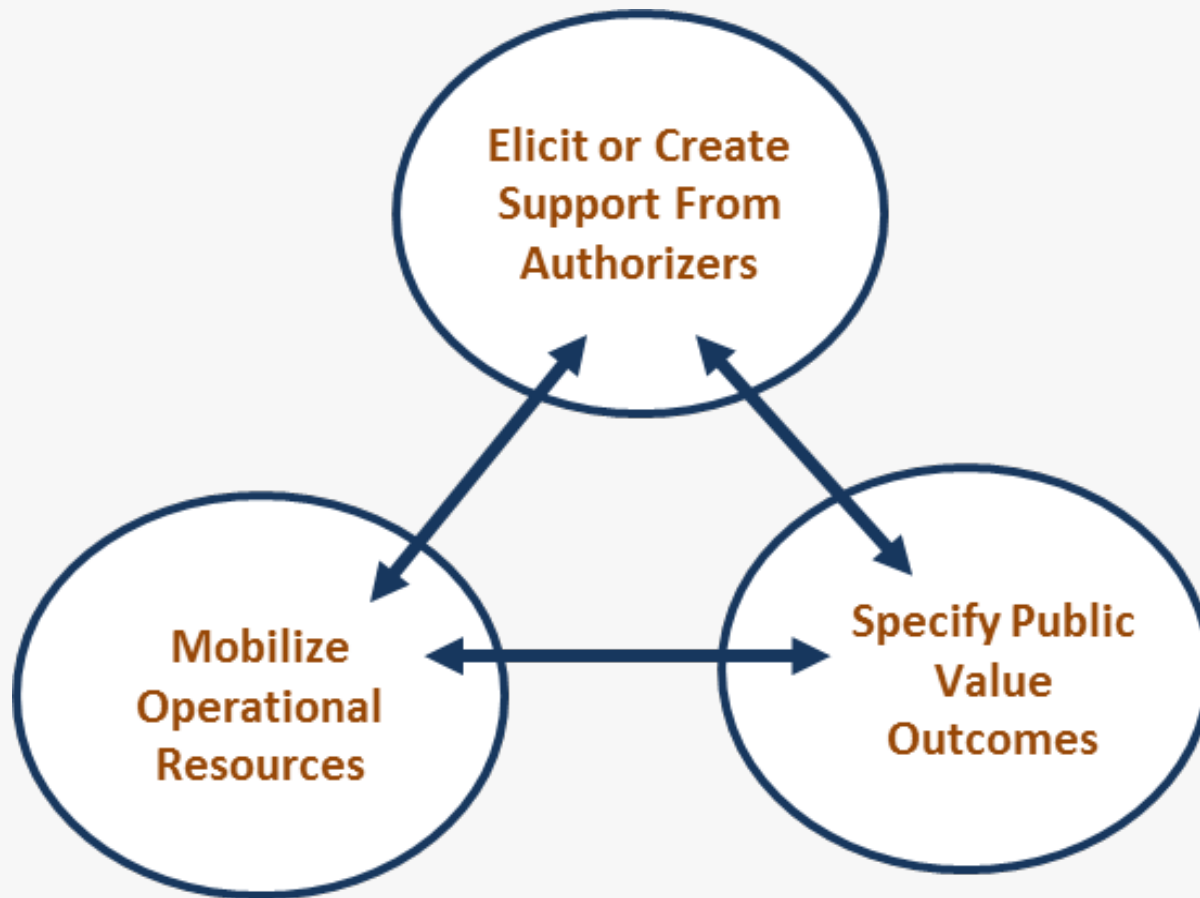
*Little Rock Arkansas*

# *The public value approach*

The concept of creating public value through public sector programs comes from a book by Mark Moore. He wrote about what public sector managers should do to improve the performance of public enterprises by looking for opportunities to create public value beyond what is required by public mandates.



# *Key influence: Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle*

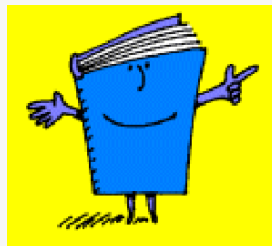


---

Moore, M. (1995). *Creating public value: strategic management in government*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

# One popular view of private and public value in Extension is:

- **Private Value** – the value of Extension education to the participants of Extension's programs
- **Public Value** – the value of Extension education to those who do not “directly” benefit from the programs



# *According to Laura Kalambokidis, a program has public value if .....*

- **It narrows an information gap**
  - Does the program provide information to people who do not have access to private information sources?  
Does the program make information available in a way that participants will use it and act on it?
- **It addresses a crucial concern about fairness (justice) in the distribution of resources**
  - Does it provide services and commodities that should be available to everyone such as good nutrition or environmental quality?
- **One person's participation benefits people who do not participate**
  - Does it benefit others in the community such as children of adults in parenting programs, siblings and peers of youth in 4-H programs, community members in areas where air quality programs are held?
- **One person' participation reduces costs for others**
  - Does it reduce social costs such as health care because obesity rates go down or environmental cleanup costs go down in communities where environmental protection classes are held?
- **It contributes to the public good**
  - Did the crime rate, substance abuse occurrences or obesity statistics go down?

# *Evaluating for Public Value (EPV) Framework*



# *Communicating public value*

- **Public value statements** are short and complete similar to an elevator speech.
  - **Public value stories** are longer with more detail and include statements about credibility, publicness, outcomes, and impacts,
  - **Digital public value messages** are visual representations and can reach audiences through social media
-

# *CREATING A PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT*

When you support \_\_\_\_\_ program,  
participants will \_\_\_\_\_, which leads to  
\_\_\_\_\_, which will benefit others in the  
community by \_\_\_\_\_, and other  
outside of the community by \_\_\_\_\_



# *Example statements*

Extension's community leadership program reduces a community's disaster recovery period for businesses, schools, and residents. This action saves lives and countless dollars in emergency recovery operations and avoids job loss.

Over 100,000 people from 70% of counties in the state participated in energy savings programs. 70% of the participants indicated implementing one or more recommended practices that will realize a projected savings of \$5 million each year of the program. This benefits communities by decreasing reliance on public assistance, keeps more money in communities, and creates local jobs to meet energy retrofitting needs.

---

# *Public Value Story Rubric*

1. How well does the story demonstrate the trust and respect that Extension has established with its key audiences?  
**(Organizational Credibility)**
  2. How well does the story demonstrate Extension programs, staff and volunteers meeting the needs of underrepresented populations in important ways? **(Publicness)**
  3. How well does the story demonstrate Extension adapting to meet changing needs of its key audiences? **(Publicness)**
-

# *Public Value Story Rubric*

4. How well does the story demonstrate behavior changes that resulted from Extension programming? **(Outcomes)**
  5. How well does the story demonstrate ways that Extension leverages organizations or partnerships to expand the delivery of research and education beyond initial program participants? **(Impacts)**
  6. How well does the story demonstrate ways that Extension programming led to positive social, economic, environmental, cultural, health, or civic effects for public-serving organizations or communities? **(Impacts)**
-

# Handout – Examples of public value stories



# *EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC VALUE DIGITAL MESSAGES*




<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5w25UgWMTs&feature=youtu.be>

<http://crowmenshealth.org/>

# *Uses of public value messages*


---

- County level
  - Program level (state, region or national)
  - National reporting
- 

# *Small Group Discussion*

---

How can the program area your table represents:

- 1) meet the changing needs of the community
  - 2) achieve intended outcomes
  - 3) expand the delivery of research and information
  - 4) take action beyond their primary purpose
  - 5) establish trust and respect in the community
  - 6) meet the needs of underrepresented?
- 

## **CRED Public Value Statements**

### **Arkansas**

The Latino entrepreneurship program has increased the social capital, helped facilitate integration of different ethnic populations, increased Latino participation in community programs and has the potential to increase household incomes and local revenue for local schools and governments.

### **Florida**

UF/IFAS has adopted an innovative response to helping rural households and other economically vulnerable populations with disabilities with respect to delivering free tax preparation. The UF/IFAS Extension VITA sites were responsible for 1400 returns in 2013. Each return serves as saving approximately \$250. This equates to \$350,000 in economic impact to the state for the household to spend in local economies.

### **Michigan**

When you support MSU Extension, participants learn how to implement best practices in good governance that keeps communities solvent, productive and engaged; learn effective conflict management skills that help leaders and residents work collaboratively on complex issues; and engage youth leaders in decision-making. In the personal finance area, MSU Extension helps youth and adults alike learn the skills they need to increase their savings, manage their spending avoid predatory lending and reduce mortgage defaults. All of these outcomes help lower the cost of governmental services and lead to personal and community stability, strong neighborhoods and safe communities.

### **Mississippi**

The Mississippi State University Extension Service developed and directs the Rural Medical Scholars program. The objective of the program is to "grow local docs" for the state by identifying talented and interested high school students and exposing them to academics and experiences relevant to the life of a family medicine physician. During the program, the Scholars enroll in two pre-medicine courses, "shadow" local physicians, and participate in a variety of activities related to rural physicians. To date, 275 students have completed the program. A recent study has shown that the addition of one physician to a typical Mississippi county results in an increased economic output of \$2 million.

### **Missouri**

MU Extension community development programs result in engaged citizens, expanded leadership, broader inclusion of community members, buy-in from the community, adoption of policies, implementation of plans, sound proposals put before voters, and increased economic activity. Communities benefit from wise use of public and private resources.

When you support MU Extension community arts programs, citizens across the spectrum of the community discover and experience ways the arts enrich their lives. Communities discover and enhance community building and pride of place, spark innovation and create new economic opportunity.

When you support MU Extension's Community Emergency Management Program, communities, businesses, schools and residents reduce a community's disaster recovery period. This action saves lives and significant dollars in emergency recovery operations and avoids job loss. Additionally, the whole community builds a greater sense of cohesion.



## **Nebraska**

The Nebraska EDGE programs help individuals better manage their businesses which translates to added jobs, better investments and more robust rural economies.

When you support Extension natural resource based tourism development programs, participants learn skills to develop value added agricultural entrepreneurial businesses and public programs such as visitor centers. These programs enhance sustainable economic development opportunities for individuals and communities by bringing in outside tourism dollars to the community.

Rural participants in the programs provided through the Bit Mobile, incorporate electronic technology into their businesses leading to greater efficiency and reduced costs, which will benefit other community members by sustaining local businesses.

## **North Dakota**

Typical projects originating through NDSU's Manufacturing Extension include proprietary research, quality assurance, inventory control, plant layout, human resources, product design, prototyping, locating manufacturing companies to build products, manufacturing process improvement, assistance in developing business and marketing plans, product patenting information, policy and procedural items, grant writing assistance, business startups, domestic and global outsourcing, and safety and environmental issues. NDSU Manufacturing Extension programming helped companies increase efficiencies resulting in the retention of employees who, in turn, increase community economic vitality.

- Manufacturers/Entrepreneurs/Inventors assisted: 172
- Research grant funds leveraged: \$150,000
- Efficiency savings: \$150,000
- Trained 200+ industry employees in process improvement and business startup

## **Texas**

The Community & Economic Development Program has developed a 2-part training series focusing on understanding and completing a business plan. Throughout the workshop, industry partners provide training and feedback on topics such as marketing, customer service, products and services, industry analysis, customer analysis, target markets, pricing, operations, as well as budgeting and sales forecasting. The 2-day experience garnered a strong showing of over 80 guest participants in attendance representing targeted counties across Texas. In 2012 the Big Boom Business Planning Institutes had a potential investment of more than \$6,250, 000 in the community, a potential of more than 2,420 jobs created, and a completed business plans in hand.

## **West Virginia**

Comprehensive plans for counties, cities, and towns enable municipalities to create safe and healthy environments for their citizens to live and prosper. These plans also enhance the ability of communities to create revenues, such as tourist revenues, help them attract new residents to their communities and improve property values. All of this creates new income for local communities as well as the state.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **Urban 4-H Cultural Exchange Program Nurtures Youth to Breakdown Racial and Ethnic Stereotypes**

By Anna Brekke

Prior to participating in the cultural exchange program 4-H had been a part of Anna Brekke's life for more than ten years. She had participated in a number of project areas over the years, noting some of her favorites including clothing, swine, leadership, citizenship, and demonstrations. She also served as a Scott County senior ambassador, and served as the Scott County 4-H Leader's Council president. She feels that all of her experiences have been amazing, but notes that this year she was able to participate in something different that left a life-long impact on her: the Urban Youth Cultural Exchange program.



The Cultural Exchange program was piloted this past year, with Anna as one participant in its first cohort. The purpose of the exchange is to create relationships and have participants' eyes opened by new experiences as they engage in rich discussions and activities to learn about cultural similarities and celebrate differences. The exchange included one 4-H group from the Fond du Lac Reservation and another 4-H group from the Twin Cities metro area, each group hosting the others in their communities. There were also a series of pre-trip and post-trip meetings in each community to prepare and reflect on the experience. The program is geared for middle and high school aged youth.

Addressing racial stereotypes and prejudices are a critical issue in our society. Racial gaps in educational and human service outcomes persist. According to the 2013 OneMinneapolis report, (MinneapolisFoundation.org) there are staggering gaps in outcomes between people of color and Whites in Minneapolis. 91% of White students are prepared for kindergarten in comparison with 41% of Hispanic children. 91% of third grade White students are proficient in reading compared with 45% of American Indian. While an estimated five percent of White children are living in poverty, an estimated 71% of foreign-born Black children lived in poverty in Minneapolis in 2009-2011. Although many programs exist to help narrow gaps such as these, few programs offer opportunities to engage with people who are different from themselves, leading to cultural tolerance and understanding. The 4-H Cultural Exchange program is an extraordinary opportunity for all youth—regardless of their cultural heritage—to gain a first-hand understanding of cultural differences.

Anna Brekke wasn't sure what to expect when she was invited to participate in this pilot program. According to the 2010 census, Scott County where Anna lives is 87.5% White. She does not have the advantage of interacting with people from different racial and ethnic heritages on a regular basis.

When I went to the first meeting at Franklin Library in Minneapolis, I was very nervous. To be honest, when I walked in and saw that other than Kathryn Sharpe, the program coordinator I was the only Caucasian person in the group among Somalis, Latinos, Natives, and Asians, I was scared.

But as I got to know and love these people, I realized how wrong I was to be so scared of being a part of such an amazing group. When it was time to travel to the Fond du Lac reservation, my worries were gone, leaving only excitement. At the reservation we learned about making maple syrup, attended powwows, or native dances, and learned about Native history at the Fond du Lac museum. The most important part to me, however, was making connections with the Native youth and deepening connections with my own group of urban 4-Hers.



There was a particular moment during the powwow at the reservation that really impacted me. It was the part of the dance open to anyone, but there were only native people dancing. Suddenly, all of our Fond du Lac friends invited us to dance and taught us the steps. In that moment, many different cultures came together and had a good time despite our differences. Yeah we got stares from some people, but few of them were judgmental. Most were just surprised and happy to see us all having fun together.

After such an influential weekend, I couldn't wait for the Fond du Lac 4-Hers to come to the cities for a weekend. When they did, we went to the Somali mall, heard speakers from many different cultural backgrounds, ate exotic food, walked down the Nicollet Mall, and ended with learning about every culture at the Minnesota History Center. During this weekend, stereotypes I had before were eliminated from my mind and replaced by the amazing friendships made throughout this experience. I was able to open my mind and try new things that I would not be normally comfortable with, like eating food that I didn't recognize, talking to business owners at Midtown Market in Minneapolis, and asking Latino immigrants questions about their experiences. This experience not only taught me about other cultures, but it also taught me more about my own. Because my family has lived here for so long, culture is a thing that I did not often think about. Now I know that it is a significant part of me.

Throughout the experience I also became more aware of the stereotypes I make: whether based on race, age, gender, and more. As Scott County is becoming more diverse, and as I look to my future, I think it is very important to work against these stereotypes in similar ways that I did on the cultural exchange. I am excited to be a part of implementing what I have learned in my own community. We all stereotype, but that doesn't mean we cannot work to make those stereotypes disappear.

As Anna looks forward to attending college and her future career, she will be better prepared to face the cultural challenges in the workplace and as a leader in her own community as a result of this Cultural Exchange Program.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **Extension Partners with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to Offer Pesticide Safety and Environmental Education—Private Applicator Recertification Program**

By Tana Haugen-Brown

When Minnesotans bite into a locally-grown apple or enjoy a fresh slice of locally grown and baked, whole wheat bread, they should consider how lucky they are to live in a state with strict pesticide management mandates.

One mandate for private applicators—farmers who apply restricted-use pesticides on their crops—requires passing a test to demonstrate knowledge and skills relating to pesticide use. After the initial test, farmers can choose whether to retest or attend a workshop once every three years. Regardless, regular recertification is required if the farmer uses restricted-use pesticides. Many farmers choose the workshop as a way to keep up with the latest research.

On a chilly February day in 2014, farmers gathered at the Albany Bowling Center in Stearns County to attend a three and a half hour workshop on private pesticide application. Although farmers are applying the pesticides on their own land, it is in their best interest as well as their community's and the State's interest to ensure application adheres to 14 State standards. Pesticide drift issues may impact neighboring farms or the greater community. Pesticides may impact the ecosystem.



Furthermore, without proper protection and equipment, farmers put themselves and their families at serious risk of exposure. The certification training is critical to keep farmers informed of current pesticide laws, regulations and recording keeping, appropriate use of personal safety equipment, applicator health effects, and use of applicator equipment. The training also covers the latest evidence-based approach to crop and pest issues and integrated pesticide management.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) partnered with Extension to offer the recertification educational programming. This partnership was designated through a legislative mandate. It recognized Extension's role as a land grant University to translate the latest research into practical application. This certification program is a prime example of how Extension fulfills this mission.



Each year since 2007, approximately sixty workshops are held statewide. In 2014, 1,826 farmers attended workshops. Farmers, agricultural retailers and other stakeholder groups have been enthusiastic about the workshops and how they help farmers achieve public outcomes related to pesticides.

The program draws on the latest research to educate farmers. The program's primary public outcome is safety, security, health and environmental protection for applicators, their families and communities, and for the general public. The program is tailored to emerging issues and regional needs, by selecting from flexible workshops modules and pairing training with other Extension education events. This responsive model has brought in many participants new to Extension educational programs. This critical pesticide management workshop supports the ongoing and ever-changing needs of applicators for current and up-to-date crop production information by responding to input from program stakeholders and research findings from state faculty.

Farmers respond to the workshops, translating their learning into practice in their pesticide application and management practices. Follow-up surveys from 961 farmers who participated in the 2011 or 2012 recertification workshops showed that 72.5% of the farmers made one or more decisions directly tied to what they learned at the workshop and 45% made two or more of these decisions. Ninety-one percent of the farmers plan on attending a workshop again. Their primary reasons for attending versus other options for recertification (such as a written exam) include the added educational benefits and the interaction with Extension educators. They turn to Extension for the latest research on pesticide use and management.

"There's a risk-benefit associated with using pesticides" Joe Spitzmueller, Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture explained. "This certification program mitigates those risks. Applicators who attend the workshops get information that will help reduce their risk of pesticide exposure, and help them respond to spills or other incidents that occur." Spitzmueller also commented that the educational program is dynamic, as the Extension educators provide the latest information to farmers.

Spitzmueller feels that working with Extension provides accurate and relevant information for farmers. "Partnering with Extension educators to develop and conduct the workshops, we know that the material used to evaluate [applicator] qualifications is accurate, reasonable for farmers to learn and provided in a way that makes sense."

Extension is uniquely positioned—and mandated by Minnesota statute—to work in consultation with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to provide this critical workshop training. Thanks to the partnership between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Extension, people can have confidence about Minnesota-grown produce and the land stewardship fostered by this program. Minnesota farmers feed families today, but protect our resources for tomorrow.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **My Little Green Friends Extension Master Gardener Program Nurtures a Path for Healing in Ramsey County**

By Leonard Gloeb and Ed Shinbach, Master Gardener Volunteers

For the past 28 years, The University of Minnesota Extension's Ramsey County Master Gardener Program has been involved collaboratively with Children's Hospital of St. Paul to implement a horticultural therapy program known as My Little Green Friends. This unique program fulfills the mission of the hospital to provide family-centered care focusing on the physical and emotional well-being of children and families. It also fulfills a mission of the Master Gardener Program in Ramsey County, not only educating children and adults of all ages the importance of plants to our community wellness but also in this instance, as a path to individual healing.

The project provides an enjoyable activity that both brightens the atmosphere of what can sometimes be a tedious, fearful, and painful experience and also provides the children with a real sense of accomplishment.

The Ramsey County Master Gardeners plan the horticultural projects that are conducted with the children most commonly on a personal one-to-one basis in their rooms or playroom. There are approximately 35 projects in all, each documented with an activity plan to list the project purpose, materials needed, and activity procedure.



Separate projects are included for children who cannot be exposed to soil, such as those undergoing chemotherapy for cancer treatment. Master Gardeners, one or two at a time, conduct the projects two days a week year round, including holidays. Children in the following wards are visited: epilepsy, intensive care, short stay, and two inpatient floor wards. The project plant materials are most commonly grown by a Master Gardener team member from cuttings, but may be purchased as well. A master gardener works directly with a child on a project. One project gives the child the opportunity to create a Houseplant Zoo featuring various plants with names that suggest an animal. For example, they plant an Elephant Bush or *Portulacaria afra* and the child chooses a small plastic animal as "protector" while learning about general care of indoor plants. Another project is planting a bulb garden, where they plant daffodil bulbs on a bed of pebbles, teaching children how bulbs grow and the role of soil in plant growth. Autumn Leaves is another project in which they make a collage of colorful autumn leaves, teaching children where leaf color comes from. With each project, the child is given a care sheet that also contains general educational information about the project.

Outcomes of this collaboration can be quantitatively appreciated. In 2011, a typical year, 1312 children and 1513 adult family members and friends participated in the program and was comprised of 69% Caucasian, 19% African American or Middle Eastern, 6% Hispanic/Latino, and 6% Asian. This is a wonderful reflection of the diversity in the population of the Twin Cities metro area.

The truer sense of the impact of My Little Green Friends, comes from the feedback routinely received from nurses, children, and family members in the course of the project. In one case, after planting with other children in the playroom, a little boy turned to his mother and said: "Look Mom, my plant." Afterward, a nurse expressed to the Master Gardener involved that these had been the first words the boy had spoken in the five days he had been in the hospital. When the Master Gardener asked another young girl if she wanted to write her name on her project, the girl quietly said she did and very slowly wrote out her name. The Master Gardener noted the tension in the room full of family members. When the girl finished, her face lit up with a huge smile while an audible sigh and words of support were heard from her relatives. It turned out that the girl had sustained a brain injury, making the seemingly simple task of writing her name much more difficult and its success much more rewarding.

Moreover, the therapy program has proven to be beneficial to children of all ages. A hospital staff person noted, "Teenagers will often only open their blinds to provide lights for their plants when otherwise they would remain in a dark room."

In addition to the significant impact the program has had on patients' in-hospital emotional well-being, it has also been successful in making plants a lasting part of their lives. Each project introduces plants and plant care to the children in such a fun and interactive way, it's very common to hear comments about patients having their plants many years after leaving the hospital. A favorite quote: "Leonard [Master Gardener volunteer] is one of my special friends. When I was a patient here about six years ago, I received a plant from him and I still have it."



A hospital staff person suggested that repeat visitors mention their plants and the experience they had with the Master Gardener. One staff person commented, "Many repeat visit kids have told us that the one thing they remember about the hospital is planting. They often still have their plants from previous admissions. Sometimes, the plants are several years old."

A more concrete measure of the project's impact is that the horticultural therapy project helped justify approval of the hospital's construction of a rooftop garden for patient relaxation and therapy- a significant expenditure and commitment from the hospital, and very much a measure of how highly the program is valued.

In 2013, My Little Green Friends Program received the Search for Excellence Award by the International Master Gardeners Conference Committee.

We look forward to our continued collaboration and thank the many Ramsey County Master Gardener volunteers who have brought such great joy and satisfaction to the youngsters at Children's Hospital of St. Paul over the years.



## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY

**Pines School-Schoolyard Garden Project: Master Gardeners Working with Incarcerated Youth in Anoka County**

By Rachel Beehler

An electrician, an interpreter for the deaf and a chemist walk into a juvenile detention facility. What do you get? Teaching, learning, sharing and compassion about gardening. This is exactly the outcome we get! The University of Minnesota Extension Anoka County Master Gardener program has made a very strong connection with the Anoka County Secure Program (ACS) operating as Pines School located at the Lino Lakes Correctional Facility in Lino Lakes, MN the past two years. The ACS program is an all-male detention youth facility with short-term, long-term, and sex offender programs. The short-term program consists of male and female youth on all contracts, court detention, detention and waiting placement.

The long-term program is for youth who have been adjudicated of a felony criminal offense and have a history of other adjudications and/or inappropriate behaviors. The sex offender specific program is for youth who have been adjudicated of sex specific crimes. Length of stay varies from 4-18 months. The age of the male youth varies from 14-18 years old.

Over the past two years, three Extension Master Gardeners in Anoka County have dedicated over 250 hours focusing on teaching youth about plant science and gardening practices. Along with Pines School staff, they have built a large 50 X 100 foot schoolyard garden utilized as an outdoor classroom space. Early in the spring students begin planning, designing and envisioning the garden space. The youth start seeds indoors and receive transplants from community donations. In conjunction with their current science curriculum, the Master Gardeners teach students soil science, seed starting, plant propagation, photosynthesis, composting, etc. on a weekly basis. The program is continued throughout the summer with the focus of the summer activities taking place outdoors. During the summer the youth harvest and consume the crops and prepare different dishes. This enables them to enjoy the garden, to try new foods, and to make healthy food choices.



In 2013, an Extension Educator from the Nutrition program in Anoka County provided multiple cooking lessons with students utilizing produce that was grown in the garden. Many learned that eggplant really does taste good. Since many of these students came from home experiences of not knowing when or where their next meal would come from, they tended to fill their plates to overflowing.

The Master Gardeners are very positive role models for these youth and it has been a win-win situation for all groups involved. For most of the youth, gardening is a completely foreign subject. Learning





about where food comes from really connects the students to their environment and has been expressed to be a new interesting topic for them. The physical aspects of this program can be very calming and relaxing. Some students found that they were able to relieve aggression and built up tension by working in the soil. A few found that gardening chores were a reward given for good behavior during the program.

When the youth were asked specifically about the program outcomes, every student stated that they enjoyed learning in the garden. They shared several of their favorite topics and the question that received the most heartfelt answers was when asked "Do you feel that this gardening program helped you during the time you spent at the ACS and why/or why not?" One response summed up this experience "The gardening program was definitely enjoyable, and it really added another aspect to my treatment that I will never forget." The youth are very respectful and commended the Master Gardeners for taking time out of their busy lives to teach them about gardening.

This program has also made an impact on the Master Gardener volunteers who serve on the project. One of the Master Gardeners, Bob Vaughn, wrote a couple of articles about the project for a local newspaper and expressed how the program had influenced him. "Pines School New Growth Garden is one of the most rewarding projects I have had the privilege to serve on. Volunteering in any manner is fulfilling but especially when we are able to help the youth of our communities."

According to Jim Ford, former teacher and liaison to the project, when asked about impacts of the program, he stated, "I do know that the garden had positive impacts on many students... especially on



behavior. One female student sticks out in my mind. She was an eighth grader in our first year who was placed at the Pines Day Program due to repeated extreme behavior problems at her middle school. She has severe ADHD, a low IQ, and several academic learning disabilities. She struggled in my class academically, but I was amazed to discover her passion for gardening.

The first few days out in the garden, it was clear she had been bitten by the gardening bug. She would ask me for a task, go and diligently complete it with care and attention, and then come straight back to me for the next task. She was engaged, asked insightful questions about the plants she was tending to. She showed a high level of focus in the garden, that was absent in the classroom. Her special

education individualized education plan (IEP) case manager quickly took notice of her green thumb and we quickly began using it as a carrot, pun intended! If she completed an assignment or task in school, then she would be allowed 15 minutes in the garden to weed. Imagine weeding as a reward! She would also come back inside happier, calmer, and more compliant. She was so fascinated by the process of germination that I gave her all of our left-over flower seeds and she took them home and began her own flower garden.

She represents exactly the kind of student this project was aimed at helping: someone who learns by doing, and is rewarded working in the garden with a sense of accomplishment, and contributing to something larger than themselves."

Although this program is challenging to quantitate and wrap numbers around to evaluate, the electrician, interpreter for the deaf and the chemist are very confident that there is a difference made in the lives of these youth. This is precisely the type of connection the University of Minnesota Extension Anoka County Master Gardener Program can take pride in knowing that they have made a difference teaching gardening to a specific audience in need while creating a stronger community through education.



## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY

## Extension Agricultural Educators Take Swift Action during 2014 Flood Crisis

By Molly Illes

Minnesota farmers faced a serious problem this year. Record-breaking flooding made planting forage crops challenging. Now, at the end of the planting and harvest season, some farmers have to cope with having to sell livestock or even sell their family farms. As farmer Mike Ratka put it, “I spent many sleepless nights this summer.” Ratka raises beef cattle in Foley, Minnesota. Currently he has 170 animals. He, like many farmers, was panicked, searching for forage crop options this year. He ended up planting rye grass and sorghum which is different than he has done in the past. He also planted oats and radishes for grazing. This was the first time he’d planted like this, having to adjust his practice due to the flooding in his fields in the late spring.

Farmers have many resources to help them make decisions. They can turn to their crop insurance agents, wading through copious legal documents to determine what they are—and are not—able to plant, when—and when they are not—allowed to harvest. There are bankers, suppliers and other agricultural businesses that offer information. But this year was especially challenging due to the unusual flooding.

With 170 cows and replacement heifers relying on food for the long Minnesota winter, Ratka needed to know his forage crops would support his animals for the duration. To get solid information to help him decide which forage crops to plant and how to navigate through the unusual conditions, he attended a Prevent Plant & Forage crop meeting on June 10, 2014 in Foley, Minnesota. Extension educator Dan Martens collaborated with industry and others for this emergent meeting. This is one example of many meetings held in Benton and neighboring Minnesota Counties to address this particular crisis. Extension offers meetings like these on a regular basis, informing farmers on many different topics.



This particular season, however, timely meetings like the June 10 forage crop event helped farmers cope with the flooding and make decisions. Byron Seeds stepped up to pay for the facility use and a meal after the meeting. They had an interest in this because they handle seed for a lot of alternative forage crops and crops that might be used as cover crops on prevented planting acres. Rick Tamm represented the seed company on the panel presenting information during the meeting. He talked about characteristics of alternative forage crops farmers might consider depending on how much of a planting delay there was and what their feed and cover crop interests might be. Other panelists included Wayne Triplet from Crop Revenue Insurance who talked about crop insurance rules related to decisions farmers were making. A private sector dairy nutritionist Russ Fisher talked about how alternative forages, particular sorghum and sudan grass crop might fit in dairy rations. University of Minnesota Extension educator, Dan Martens talked about the 2002-

2003 field trials related to a corn silage preference and consideration of sorghum and sudan grass crops due to the extreme wet conditions this year.

According to Ratka, one of the most important aspects of meetings like this one is that Extension brings together all of these different people so the conversation isn't "preaching to make a sale" as it might be if he contacted his crop insurance agent or sales representative. "This was a desperate issue at hand, we needed to figure out what to do for the best outcome" Ratka commented.

Dale Hansen, owner of Luxemburg Feed Services, Shawn and Mike of Wincher Seeds and Byron Seeds were glad that their companies were able to support this meeting. They understand that when they partner with Extension, the focus of the meeting is on education and sharing information, not on promoting their businesses. An estimated 120 people attended the meeting, searching for answers to questions and information to make the most practical and evidence-based decisions during this crisis. Hansen acknowledges that this was an important meeting to support and he'd do it again. He also understands that Extension cannot endorse a product or favor one company over another. It's something he accepts when partnering with Extension to support programming such as this one. He also feels that by partnering with Extension, people will come to the event. "Extension needs to be involved because people come and they listen to them [Extension educators]."

Farmer Mike Ratka mentioned that Extension educators are a frequent resource he turns to whenever he needs answers. "I really appreciate Dan Martens, I have him on speed dial and really value his opinion and help any-time I need it."



In addition to the meeting on June 10 and other similar meetings throughout the region, Martens made several short radio appearances on AM radio channels in Albany, Little Falls and Sartell addressing the crop issues impacted by the wet summer conditions. "When Dan Martens [Extension educator] talks, people listen...He has a way of sharing a wealth of in-

formation in a hurry and in a timely manner." Dale Hansen remarked, "He can pack into 2 minutes what takes others a lot longer to explain."

Alas, Mike Ratka and his cattle survived the soggy spring and unusually cool summer. They planted and harvested different forage crops this year than in past years. He overcame obstacles that were beyond his control. He made decisions every step of the way, informed by many sources, but especially guided by the trusted source, University of Minnesota Extension agriculture educators like Dan Martens.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **Extension Helps Revitalize the City of Monticello through its Business Retention and Expansion Program**

By Adeel Ahmed

The City of Monticello is a distant Minneapolis suburb that meets the hinterland. Monticello experienced rapid growth during the housing boom. In fact, Wright County was the fastest growing county in population before the housing crisis impacted cities across the United States. The city was greatly affected when the housing bubble burst in 2008.

In response to the sudden decline in business, Monticello leaders developed a partnership in 2009 with local Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and University of Minnesota Extension to participate in the Business Retention and Expansion Program (BR&E). Developed by Extension, this program helps make local businesses be more competitive by evaluating and addressing some of their key needs and concerns. By addressing common business concerns, the community ensures a healthier future for itself. Businesses that stay competitive are more likely to remain in the community and possibly expand. The program also establishes an economic development plan for the community and a broad-based community coalition to sustain long term economic development efforts.



Due to the sudden economic downturn, business owners, city leaders and community members were stressed and concerned about the city's future. The relationship between business owners and city officials had also become strained due to the crisis. The

Monticello Business Retention and Expansion Program (BR&E) was designed to assist Monticello's businesses to thrive. While the attraction of new businesses and new business start-ups are important components of any economic development strategy, research has shown that 40 to 80 percent of new jobs are created by existing businesses rather than by new businesses.

The Monticello BR&E Program took a comprehensive and coordinated approach to assisting existing businesses. Having participants visit current businesses and learning their concerns was only one component of the process. The BR&E program builds awareness of issues that face businesses and builds capacity for the community to address these issues. The program assists local leaders and community members in working together to provide solutions to business concerns.



The program had five objectives: To demonstrate support for local businesses, to help solve immediate business concerns, to increase local businesses' ability to compete in the global economy, to establish and implement a strategic plan for economic development, and to build community capacity to sustain growth and development.

Sixty businesses participated in site visits and a BR&E survey. Based on the visits and survey responses, the BR&E leadership team adopted priority projects to address issues that arose from this process.



Projects included the creation of a business concierge service, giving businesses access to workers with the right skills, and effective recruitment avenues. Second, businesses noted the need for improved transportation infrastructure to meet the needs of the growth over the last fifty years. Although businesses like the small-town atmosphere in Monticello, they determined a future project should create recreational opportunities.

Through the BR&E process, members from the business and civic community worked together to assess the city's needs. The program gave diverse people the opportunity for open, respectful dialogue. As a group they agreed that a project priority should be to form a business roundtable. As businesses face challenging decisions,

they agreed that networking with others from the business community and city leaders would allow them to work together toward change.

The main partnership and success of this program was the rejuvenated relationship between city and business leaders. Two groups represented businesses - the chamber of commerce and the Monticello Industrial & Economic Development Committee (IEDC). At the onset of the program, some city leaders were reluctant about going on business visits. In the end, however, one program participant suggested that, "this program helped develop a greater commitment to the business community." Another participant observed, "I think city staff now feel that if they reach out they will find a friendly and receptive audience." Business leaders also learned the importance of working with city staff. One mentioned that as a result of the BR&E program, "I realized the value of getting involved in civic affairs." Through this program, relationships were nurtured and trust was once again established. Another person observed, "I am seeing the business are learning from each other especially about regulatory and zoning issues."

This is a key outcome for the Monticello BR&E program. Previously strained relationships between city and business leaders were improved. Today they continue to work together and communicate which is a direct result of this program. The city was able to implement its transportation plan, one that had been on the table for over 5 years. They have also been able to make a concerted marketing effort of the city's assets to be able to attract and host larger meetings and conferences.

These projects happened because volunteers from the community interviewed the businesses, and used the data, with assistance from UMN Extension. Without this program, the rapid progress of adopting the transportation plan as well as the comprehensive marketing effort would not likely have occurred. More importantly, the relationship between city official and business leaders may not have been restored. Monticello, with the help of University of Minnesota Extension program staff, was able to overcome some basic entrenched issues many towns face with respect to the relationship between city and business leaders. They took action during the depths of the Great Recession.

Now the city is taking action, supporting businesses and will likely show they pulled ahead because of its proactive stance in solving problems. Business leaders are more engaged in civic affairs. The BR&E program helped participants develop personal and professional skills. Together through this program, the network of participants developed the infrastructure to collaboratively address head-on the challenges that lie ahead.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

**Extension Helps Lindstrom Conduct Tourism Assessment to Strengthen City's Future**

By Liz Templin

In 2008, when Lindstrom city leaders wanted to strengthen the city's appeal as a tourist attraction, they turned to Extension to conduct research on Lindstrom's opportunities and challenges. The Chisago Lakes Area Tourism Assessment Program was conducted by University of Minnesota Extension's Center for Community Vitality in collaboration with the University of Minnesota Tourism Center in 2008.

The key findings from the Lindstrom Tourism Assessment Program showed major strengths were the area's Swedish heritage and area lakes. They found a major weakness was the lack of hospitality facilities and lack of community cohesiveness, especially relating to conflict over the Highway 8 redesign. Major opportunities included being a Swedish tour destination and proximity to the Twin Cities for day trips. Major threats included failing lakeshore septic systems, lack of community cooperation, traffic congestion, and the lure of Wisconsin attractions.

Based on the information from the assessment, city leaders developed six strategies to develop potential tourism. First, they sought to establish a leadership group to "champion" tourism development projects. Second, they would develop the Swedish connection in a systematic way.

Third, they felt they needed to develop the capacity for additional lodging, dining and hospitality opportunities. Their fourth strategy was to develop a day trip market, since they had identified the city is in close proximity to the large Twin Cities metro area. Fifth, they desired to develop methods for attracting re-aligned Highway 8 travelers to stop and shop. Finally, their sixth strategy was to build community awareness about tourism.

In the words of John Olinger, Lindstrom City Administrator, "The Tourism Assessment Program compiled various ideas and reports related to tourism and pulled them together." Thus, the Tourism Assessment Program was a launching point for local action. To address the strategies, the Chisago Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce spearheaded re-constituting a chamber tourism committee composed of business and city administrators. This group has been meeting monthly for the past three years.

Since 2008, Lindstrom has implemented several of the ideas from that research: A bicycle trail has been completed. A former farm has been purchased to broaden lodging options. And, the city has completed projects that leverage the tourism pull of Lindstrom's Swedish heritage.





"Extension helped us focus on developing our Swedish connections and understood our wish to do it well, not develop some kind of Swedish theme park," says John Olinger, Lindstrom's city administrator.

Lindstrom is the setting for Swedish author Vilhelm Moberg's books "The Emigrants" which has been standard reading for school children in Sweden. As a result, Lindstrom has a long history of hosting individual and group visitors from Sweden. Several developments over the past three years built on the Swedish heritage.

The chamber was contacted by the National Park Service to explore eligibility for designation as a National Heritage Area. Following a visit and encouragement from the National Heritage Director, the chamber is

working with the Heritage Initiative on Discovery Workshops to see if the St. Croix Valley Watershed is a viable National Heritage Area. This designation would place the Chisago Lakes area on the national web-based map. This project is the premise for the St Croix Watershed listening sessions held to identify what the important stories are throughout the St. Croix Valley Watershed.

The Chamber Tourism Committee identified important points of interest in the area and created a Chisago Lakes area tourism brochure to share with residents and visitors. This brochure is now in its second printing and has been well received. A calendar was also created that focused on larger area events. The chamber is working on being the hub of area information, helping the cities and area organizations work together on planning and events.



In 2010, the East Central Regional Arts Council funded a local artist to develop four marquettes of historical figures: Daniel Lindstrom (founder of the city), Joris-Pelle Per Andersson (the Karl Oskar character in Vilhelm Moberg's books was based on Joris-Pelle's life), Nellie Gustafson (midwife), and Eric Norelius (Lutheran pastor). These models will be used to build life-size statues along Highway 8. Currently there is funding for Nellie.

In addition to enhancing the Swedish heritage in Lindstrom, hospitality opportunities have increased as well. The community expressed strong interest during the Tourism Assessment Program in recruiting a hotel to Lindstrom which could also host events like weddings. There has been interest on and off from hotels over the past two years, but they didn't have the convention facilities the community was seeking. The hotels were seeking, but did not find, local investors. The Chisago County Economic Development Authority has contracted with the University of Minnesota Extension to conduct a Market Area Profile for lodging to assist in the hotel recruitment effort.

The Tourism Assessment Program report articulated the need for better communication within the community. As a result, the City of Lindstrom and the chamber have made concerted efforts to increase the frequency and content of communication with businesses and residents. Since mid-2011, the City of Lindstrom has been emailing a weekly Friday update on everything related to the city. In addition, the city has held a Business Breakfast twice a year for the past two years for dialog on business concerns which has consistently drawn 50-60 people.

Since the initial 2008 Tourism Assessment, Lindstrom and the surrounding communities have made leaps of progress in achieving priorities outlined during the assessment process. An active tourism group still meets regularly. Communication among various stakeholders remains strong. The city and community members have actualized their Swedish heritage and continue to look for new tourist avenues to attract more people to stop, shop and see all that Lindstrom has to offer. "Extension's work has been enduring," says Olinger. "One thing their analysis discovered about us was that we had a lack of cohesion among the small cities around us as well as within our business community. Since then, we have focused on leadership and we now have a community tourism group."

**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY****Nutrition Educator Collaborates for Holistic Health in Benton County**

By Molly Illes

When nutrition educator, Dianne Davis-Kenning was preparing to conduct her first program at Journey Home, she wasn't sure what to expect. She'd never worked with women who were struggling to overcome addiction. She had developed her program focusing on incorporating whole grains into a healthy diet. Using MyPlate recommendations as a guide, she planned sessions about the importance of fruits and vegetables. Each session would have a hands-on cooking component, giving women at Journey Home the opportunity to try a new recipe.

Callee Nolden, director at Journey Home explained that women recovering from addiction may have a different response to learning about healthy eating than others. "It isn't necessarily about obesity, but more about body image" Callee explained. "Women who are addicted are unlikely to cook. They don't know what the norm is, what their body should look like. When they're addicted, many women are very thin. They need to learn about healthy alternatives for food since they maybe would have convenience food or subsist on things like candy bars while addicted."



Women go to Journey Home for a new start, to overcome their addiction and learn how to live a healthy life. "Once they start eating properly, they gain weight" Callee mentioned. This can be problematic for some women who need to adjust how they think and feel about their body image. The focus on Journey Home's recovery program as well as the nutritional programming conducted by Dianne Davis-Kenning is on health and helping the women learn to make healthy choices.

As Dianne started her programming, women attended and it was well received. One participant commented that she had no idea making an omelet with spinach would be so easy. "We use easy recipes since many of the women here have never cooked before" commented Dianne. "By giving them the hands-on opportunity to actually make meals, they can practice cooking and eating healthy before they leave Journey Home. They can learn how to cook food for their children."

The women's recovery center is a transitional respite for about 126 people at any given time. This is a recent increase from 65 people, with the addition of a new wing to house more women and their children. The women come and go, with an average stay of about 45 days. Journey Home even has a daycare center for the young children.

During one of the first sessions, some of the women mentioned that the cafeteria had one of their favorite meals, grilled cheese and tomato soup. They brought their meals to the cooking class. Dianne noticed right away that the sandwiches were prepared with white bread. This presented a conundrum for Dianne. On one hand, she was teaching the women to eat healthy. She



was helping them understand how to nourish their growing children by eating whole grains, fruits and vegetables. On the other hand, the cafeteria served high-sugar cereal and white bread. As she continued preparing lessons and cooking with the women, this paradox concerned her. Reinforcing healthy eating is critical. So, Dianne approached the director and food service provider. She was surprised at their response.

She worked with Callee Nolden and the food service provider contracted from Daddy-O's to see if it would be possible to incorporate healthier food preparation practices and menu items into the routine. Joel Boczk, onsite food services provider was open to change. Dianne had been concerned that he would not view the change as an opportunity. Joel, however, welcomed the assistance in adjusting recipes and adapting to healthier options. Soon after the initial interaction, Joel began replacing some of the high-sugar cereal options with whole grain options. "We're slowly transitioning. Since the new wing just opened and now we have nearly double the people to feed, we're making changes as we can" Joel commented. "We've added new, greener lettuce options to the salad bar, for example. We also added beans." Joel mentioned that some of the residents at Journey Home noticed the change. A typical breakfast used to be freshly baked caramel rolls and sausage. Now they're serving an egg burrito with more fruit options. "We used to have nutty bars, but now replaced them with pumpkin muffins" Joel said as he smiled.



Dianne's initial concern was resistance from the contracted food service provider. She brought a lump of fat to show how much is in something like a nutty bar. She also brought a sample of a fresh-baked pumpkin muffin. Joel wasn't resistant, though. He welcomes the advice Dianne has provided. This is information he never had before now. She has re-worked several of the menus, adding food that is loaded with fruits and vegetables, whole grains and reduced fat. She added taco soup to the menu for example. They first met just three months ago, and already they've partnered together to give women and their children healthier meal options. Joel also prepares lunch meals for another organization and chose to use whole grain bread. He feels that now he knows how to improve the quality and health of the food, he'll incorporate it with all his cooking. He's using whole grain noodles in the macaroni and cheese and whole grain bread for French toast sticks. He initially thought it would be hard, but has found making many replacements easy. "We're still using up inventory" Joel noted, "but we're getting there."

Dianne's classes continue. She purchased bright MyPlate posters to put in the hallways, reinforcing the healthy eating message. After making sweet potato fries one day, one of the women mentioned to Dianne that she'd purchased sweet potatoes and made them herself. As the women "graduate" from Journey Home, leaving to go back into their lives, they will get a special gift. Callee is working with Dianne to give a cookbook containing all the recipes from the classes, with the hope that the families will make healthy choices based on their new-found cooking skills.

This initiative started with Dianne offering a series of nutritional educational classes to women recovering from addiction. Then it spiraled into much more. Dianne was able to affect change in how meals were prepared and presented at Journey Home. She worked with Joel and Callee to develop many reinforcing messages about healthy eating for a holistic approach to learning and transformation. Now Dianne is considering a special program. "I'd like to work with moms and their kids down the road" and she also has plans to work with the day care staff to make sure they're serving healthy options to the children as well. Together, this nurturing group is giving women emerging from addiction the healthiest possible start in their new lives.



## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY

## The Community Mentorship Program Fills the Family Finance Knowledge Gap in Hennepin County

By Mary Jo Katras

Many community organizations struggle with the capacity to offer sustained financial education to the individuals, families and communities they serve. The Community Mentorship (CM) program was created in 2005 and is a partnership between the Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE) and the University of Minnesota Extension. MCEE identifies organizations that need help in building and strengthening their financial education services and provides mini-grants to support the development, delivery and evaluation of financial education programming. The University of Minnesota Extension partners with MCEE by having a family resiliency Extension educator mentor an organization for about 9 months to help them develop financial education programming that meets the needs of their organization and the individuals, families and communities they serve.



I first became involved in the CM program in 2014. I had heard many great things about this program and was excited to be a mentor for an organization. The Community Mentorship program was often described to me as a “train-the-trainer on steroids.” A community organization attends a two-day train-the-trainer workshop and then works one-on-one with an Extension educators in their area over the next 9 months to develop, deliver and evaluate a financial education program.

I was the mentor for Way to Grow Minneapolis (WTG) and worked with three of their staff—Megan, Marie and Eveline. WTG uses a family-centered approach and delivers programming through home visits and community-based programming for parents to build knowledge and skills. In our initial conversations, we talked that in order for children to thrive and be successful, the overall stability of the family must be addressed and that a lack of financial stability can contribute to stress in the home. We also wanted to emphasize that parents are children’s first and most important teachers. So our goal was to create programming that helps develop the parent-child relationship while building family financial capability.

The three WTG staff had just completed the 9 month Financial Educators Certificate program. They were excited to apply the knowledge they had gained through the certification and apply it to financial education programming. The opportunity to participate in the CM was the ideal as they were now able to have the time to think about what financial education programming would be most effective for the families they serve. They could use a portion of the \$4,000 mini-grant from the CM to support staff time to devote to financial education programming and also to purchase the resources they needed to create effective programming.

We met many times at their offices to develop the programming. The process was very rewarding for the staff and me. We each brought our knowledge, expertise and vision to the conversation and were able to meld our ideas together to create programming that best fit the needs of the WTG staff and the families they serve.

Critical to creating change was the ability for us to develop a trusting relationship and to co-create programming. It was not a “top-down” or prescriptive approach rather it was a process that took listening and learning. The programming we developed first supported the “parent as the teacher” approach. Marie and Eveline conducted a class with Latino mothers on budgeting and concurrently, offered programming with the children. They used active learning activities, discussion and videos to help support the participant’s learning. Next they created financial education toolkits to use in home visits. The tool kit contained tools to help families understand the budgeting process. The toolkit encouraged parents and children to continue the conversations even after the home visit and with their Family Educator on subsequent visits to create on-going personal finance education. The toolkit was one way we thought that we could build sustainability of the financial education program overtime.

We conducted an evaluation with the parents and staff. Megan, Marie and Eveline gathered the following comments from participants in the training program. They described observed comments from program participants. One participant stated that “Overall we thought the class went really well. Parents were very engaged in the program. One particular woman found the budget/savings tools very helpful. She is saving for children so they can go to private schools and have better life than she had.”



Regarding building program capacity to reach more people, one administrator mentioned, “We really hope to get an opportunity to provide more classes. Marie, Evelyn and you spend time creating the tools and instruction for the class that would be a shame not to continue the classes now that we have created everything. All classes going further should become easier with what we learned and experienced using the tools we created.” These comments reinforce the organization’s ability to expand programming and provide training going forward based on the Extension educator’s assistance.

The program also had additional impacts on families. One administrator describes the change in program participants. “It was interesting for Evelyn and Marie to see that parents who have been in the program longer were much more outspoken and engaged in the conversation. For us that demonstrates that Way to Grow is working and helping parents be better advocates for themselves. We also thought there was a good comradery between the women in the class. Hearing the stories and struggles of other families. They could relate and share their ideas and struggles.” Building community and advocacy skills are two important benefits of this program as well.

The administrator feels that having program staff help develop the materials made the delivery more realistic. “Marie and Evelyn felt that actually having participants do the budget themselves, made it more real and understandable. It will make them feel more comfortable when doing their own budget.” This demonstrates not only the competence of the program staff, but that the program has a strong likelihood of meeting participants’ needs, where they are, and helping them move forward.

In conclusion, the Extension educator serves an important role in building program capacity, bringing research and knowledge to families in under-served communities and helping distribute information about financial planning to those who may not otherwise have access to it, in a way that makes sense to the participants.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **Financial Educators Certificate Program Expands Extension's Educational Reach**

By Mary Jo Katras

The Financial Educators Certificate program exemplifies the mission of Extension—making a difference by connecting community needs and University resources to address critical issues in Minnesota. Given the changing and challenging economic conditions of the past few years, many Minnesota families continue to struggle to make ends meet. We know that there is a positive link between financial education, financial well-being, and healthy financial behavior.


Community organizations understand the importance of financial education but often lack the organizational capacity. Community organizations are constrained by time and resources but also may lack the confidence and training in the area of personal finance to feel comfortable providing financial education.

The vision for the Financial Educators Certificate program (FEC) was created by Dr. Cathy Solheim, Department of Family Social Science (FSOS) at the University of Minnesota. Through her work with community organizations, she began to recognize that many organizations struggled to have the capacity to deliver financial education and further, that staff often lacked the knowledge, skills & confidence to deliver financial education.



At the same time, there was increased attention around financial education for low-income families due to several policy changes at the federal and state level. At the federal level, 1996 welfare reform was being implemented, Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families began efforts to integrate financial education throughout programs geared for limited-resource individuals and families and the 1998 Assets for Independence (FAIM) was implemented which is a matched-savings program to help Minnesota low-wage earners build assets. At the state level, the Minnesota Ladder out of Poverty Task Force was created to encourage efforts to increase financial capability of MN individuals, families and communities.

Change began to take place at the community/organizational level as a group of University faculty, community partners and government agencies came together to begin to develop the content and delivery of the certification. Collectively they came up with the goal of the certification—to create a certification that would provide community-based professionals with knowledge and skills to work with people to manage financial resources, build financial assets, and improve financial health and well-being.



With funding from United Way, the group continued to meet several times to brainstorm about the delivery and the content of the certification. The needs of the community organization, community professionals and the families and communities they served remained at the heart of the development of the certification. The goal of the certification was to build content knowledge and confidence in community professionals to teach personal finance concepts to families and the communities they serve while help to support the sustainability of current and future financial education programming.

With help from the University of Minnesota's College of Education and Human Development technology design team, Dr. Solheim and FSOS graduate students and I developed 10 topic based online modules. The nine month online program is unique in that it covers the core financial concepts of earning, spending, saving, borrowing, and protecting but also focuses on financial behavior theory, financial education delivery methods, ethics, and program evaluation through interactive online delivery.

The FEC online program was launched in September of 2014 with a cohort of 22 community professionals from six different community organizations in the Central region. Participants who enrolled in the certification worked at a community based organization that served low-income individuals and families. The community professionals enrolled in the course for a variety of reasons such as wanting to learn about cultural difference surrounding money management, learn how to help clients build assets, gain personal financial knowledge to help clients and self and learn how to teach financial education

After completing the certification, the community professionals were asked how they planned on applying what they learned. Many of their answers reflect the ripple effect of change—increased knowledge and skills in financial education of community professionals, building the capacity of their organizations and delivering effective financial education programming to the individuals and families they work with.

Training participants commented that the knowledge and skills they gained through this training will help them serve the diverse needs of low-income families who may not receive this sort of training elsewhere. One participant commented that the training “gave us great talking points to continue to work with families and plant seeds for further discussions.” A different participant remarked that FEC program allowed them to see “that we need more practical application or exercises of financial skills that are presented for financial education.”

Another participant mentioned that the FEC program gave her tools to better respond to clients who ask for help. “I will be able to address my participants' needs if they bring up finance-related issues. I will be able to feel more confident in asking them basic finance questions when relevant. I can share knowledge and resources with my coworkers.”

In the evaluation of the FEC training, one participant acknowledged that this training will help expand the minimal financial education they do with their families, with the hope that “helping families understand their financial situation will help them understand more [about] what is savings, investment, and credit.” Likewise, another training participant commented, “Everything I learned was very useful for...our program population. My expectation is that my organization creates more opportunities to offer financial workshops culturally appropriate and by languages where I would like to participate/work with Latino families teaching them about finances.” This participant's remarks reinforce the reach of this training. The Financial Educator Certificate program helps build program capacity at non-profit organizations that otherwise have few resources to increase their financial literacy skills. In turn, the organizations will utilize the knowledge and tools learned during the training to reach innumerable Minnesota families in need.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY**

## **Nutrition Education Reaches Latino Community Members in Dakota County**

By Molly Illes

Maria Teresa Thoreson became a nutrition educator to reach communities that may not otherwise have opportunities to learn about healthy eating. She contacted Neighborhood House, an organization in West Saint Paul to investigate a new opportunity for Latino families in the community.


Neighborhood House was founded in 1897 by the women of Mount Zion Temple to assist Russian Jewish immigrants fleeing their homeland as a result of mounting bigotry and discrimination. Over 110 years later, Neighborhood House is a vibrant, thriving organization serving immigrants, refugees and low-income populations in need of a helping hand. Multi-lingual and multi-cultural, the organization serves people from around the world, who relocate to Minnesota seeking a better life for themselves and their families. In a comprehensive effort to break the cycle of poverty, Neighborhood House operates diverse programs that work together to stabilize lives.

Thoreson was interested in offering classes at Neighborhood House because the community has a large Latino population. She is concerned about obesity and type-two diabetes among

Latinos. This is a sizable social concern today. According to research 16.9 percent of Latinos living in the United States have diabetes, compared with 10.2 percent of non-Hispanic whites living with diabetes. Maria

hoped that through this community-based organization, she would be able to connect with families to help them learn how to eat healthier, reducing the risk of obesity and diabetes. She conducts her classes in Spanish and she developed her special curriculum with Latino families in mind. The women who attend her classes range in age from early twenties to more than seventy years old. They generally are low literacy and are English language learners. Maria's sessions include discussions about healthy eating, changing recipes to make them healthier, and giving tips on how to incorporate whole grains, more fruits and vegetables into meals.





An important component of the program is a hands-on cooking opportunity for women to prepare a new recipe. Taking the learning opportunity one step farther, Maria was able to get a grant from the National Council of Jewish Women. This allowed Maria to provide a bag of groceries for each participant to take home at the end of the class. Maria included the recipe of the food they prepared during the class so that with the groceries provided, course participants could try making the dish at home on their own. This reinforces their ability to prepare different food or even their own favorites in a healthier way.

Early in the course Maria realized that many of the women do not know how to read nutritional labels. She incorporated that practice into a session. Maria recognizes that it's a challenge to shift life-long behavior, especially relating to something that is the legacy of cooking within a family growing up. Maria has been able to fulfill a unique niche, though. She offers culturally specific advice for women who are challenged with the task of transforming their cooking and eating habits. Through the hands-on activities, participants can start to shift their behavior in favor of healthier options.

One participant remarked that the program and working with the nutrition educator helped her to understand people care about the Latino community here in the Twin Cities. She said that the program and Maria are “teaching us to prepare healthy food for our families, exercising. Also because there are always people like you who care about the Latino community. How to choose in stores. Ms. Maria Teresa Thoreson valuable time you've spent with us.” [Participant comments translated from Spanish to English.]

The University of Minnesota Extension nutritional programs reach many people who might otherwise not have access to the latest research on healthy eating. Moreover, few programs offer culturally-informed approaches to help those who need it, get the information they need to reduce health risks by eating a healthier, balanced diet.



## MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY

## Ka Thao's Personal Story about Silence the Violence, an Urban 4-H Program in Hennepin County

By Ka Thao

The Urban 4-H program offered Ka Thao experiences to build her perspective and help her not only apply for—but to succeed—at one of the nation's top-ranked Colleges, Carleton. This story is Ka Thao's account of her experience. In the 2010 census, there were an estimated 66,181 Hmong living in Minnesota, which is a 46% increase over the decade prior. A gap persists in college graduation rates for Hmong youth compared with non-Hispanic whites. The 2010 Census reports 13.4% of all Hmong in the United States have a college degree compared with 30.9% of non-Hispanic white who have degrees ([www.hndinc.org](http://www.hndinc.org)). It is critical to support programs that address achievement disparities among youth and help prepare them to thrive in college.

Since I did not have internet access at home, I stayed after school almost every day. On a random night in 8<sup>th</sup> grade at Anwatin Middle School in Minneapolis, they canceled the computer lab, and I didn't have a ride home. One of my best friends, Adriana, invited me to join her 4-H club for that day, and since I needed a place to go, I went with her to check it out. I literally fell in love with 4-H right away and started going every Tues. I think what drew me in was the club was run by the students. I remember that it was so relaxing, and we got to make all the choices. Then I went to the Winter Retreat at Bay Lake, and that was the first time that I was involved in an overnight trip without my family, and I really enjoyed being free from family and school, and I got to meet some great people. Then I went on the Citizenship Washington Focus trip and created an action plan for our club to become the Silence the Violence Crew 4-H Club. We came up with the action plan one evening on the DC trip so we could give something back to the community when we returned. I remember being asked what we cared about in our community and what we wanted to change, and the first thing that came to my mind was violence. In my neighborhood, I didn't even know my neighbors, and I was so disconnected because of fear of gang violence or of being kidnaped. We all put our ideas up on post-its on the wall and mine got voted on, so we decided to focus on youth violence.



After DC, I remember having a lot of discussions about what is violence and where does it come from, and then we started doing a youth violence survey to ask our communities what they thought of youth violence. I used to think that violence was ok! But 4-H has taught me that there is a different way. Violence is bigger than just the lack of knowledge of how to behave. I realized that violence is a product of fear, and fear is a form of racism.

I realized how to appreciate different cultures and ethnicities and communities. I think I might have been colorblind for a while, which I should not be, because I didn't want to think about peo-





ples' ethnicities, but I was also going through a time when I was sort of self-hating my own culture. But then I saw my friends from other cultures and saw how they love and are proud of their cultures. I learned to accept my own ethnicity, and this allowed me to accept other peoples' ethnicities and cultures at the same time. I also realized that our culture really affects us as people, and though we are not just defined by our culture or our ethnicity, our culture is still something that is part of us and cannot be ignored. It does affect our decisions and how people see us, so we need to learn how to teach others about our own culture. This has brought me closer to my own culture and community.

For me, life used to be home, school, or work. It was 4-H that helped me to see the larger world and to understand that I am a part of that larger world, and it changed me so much. I really love 4-H. 4-H taught me things that school could not teach me. In school you learn about war, but you don't know what war really is. But in 4-H we actually talked about it and we learned from people's stories about the power of it.

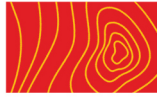


Whenever I am in 4-H I never feel like I am a youth—I never think about my age. I am allowed to speak what I think; I am allowed to come into action. I have never felt discouraged in 4-H—I have been challenged, but never discouraged. The connotation of youth is that they are immature and can only learn, but not teach. Being in 4-H, I never got that connotation of being a youth—I realized youth can sometimes be more mature than adults and can teach others.

I really liked how we structured our 4-H meetings, where we didn't have a president or a head and we rotated facilitation. I realized that everyone can be a leader and everyone can have a voice. It made me question hierarchy—what is hierarchy vs. leadership. Just because you have a position in the hierarchy doesn't mean that you are a leader. I came up with my own definition of a leader—a leader is someone who is willing to work with someone who is totally different from him/herself to achieve a common goal.

4-H helped me get into college—I wrote my essays about my 4-H experience. It gave me a different reason to go to college—I need to go to college not only for my future, but I want to go because I am from this part of society. It made me realize there is more to college than just studying or getting this degree or that degree. It is coming to campus and meeting people of different ethnicities and challenging each other.

If it hadn't been for 4-H, I don't think I would have made it to Carleton College in Minnesota. If it weren't for 4-H, I would probably have accepted other peoples' negative attitudes toward me and have already dropped out of college. But 4-H taught me not to accept that and to challenge other people's attitudes, as well as to have pride in my own identity and to know that I can do it. I have learned to appreciate my own culture and community so much that I cannot let other people define who I am.



**MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE PROJECT**

# Central Region Final Report

Molly Illes  
May 5, 2015

## Contents

About this Project.....	3
Project Purpose.....	3
Methodology .....	3
Brinkerhoff’s Success Storytelling Evaluation Method.....	4
MSC process .....	4
About Extension’s Central Region.....	4
Story Assessment Rubric .....	5
MSC Story Meta-analysis: Extension Public value Themes Across Stories.....	5
Lessons Learned.....	7
Public Value and Recommendations for a New Rubric.....	8
Story Credibility .....	10
Developing the Story .....	9
Bringing Public Value into the Story .....	9
Appendices.....	10
Outreach Review .....	10
Story Format Guide.....	11
Most Significant Change Storytelling Guide .....	11
Most Significant Change Story Submission Reflective Questions.....	13
MSC story Review process.....	14
MSC Story Rubric .....	15
Citations.....	16

## **ABOUT THIS PROJECT**

This report is the culmination of the first Most Significant Change (MSC) project that took place September through December of 2014. This project and this report build on the MSC pilot project completed in the spring of 2014 for Extension's Northwest Region of Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (NW RSDP). The pilot project tailored the MSC protocol to collect and systematically select the top stories illustrating significant change as a result of the RSDP projects.

This project continues the implementation and utilization of the MSC protocol as a means to collect, review and select the top stories that demonstrate the direct and indirect, deep impact Extension programs have on individuals, families, groups, communities and ultimately the common good within a specific geographic region.

The University of Minnesota Extension's Central Region was the first to participate in this process, following the RSDP pilot project in the Northwest Region last spring. A total of 29 stories were submitted by Extension program participants, volunteers and staff. Each of the four Extension Centers was represented by multiple story submissions. Twelve stories were chosen as the most significant. Stories spanning across counties in the Central Region. Combined, the stories reflect the many diverse ways in which Extension's work creates an impact.

## **PROJECT PURPOSE**

The Most Significant Change (MSC) project is an effort to gather rich stories about the deep impact Extension programs have on individuals, families, groups, communities and ultimately, on the common good. The project aims to promote ongoing dialogue and learning about Extension programming, with consideration for program improvement and replication; help staff and stakeholders explore the unexpected changes that individuals or groups experienced as a result of Extension programming; and to gather information-rich stories about the impact and outcomes from educational programming that may otherwise never be known.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The Most Significant Change methodology (Dart & Davies, 2003) is a participatory, story-based approach to constructing an evaluative snapshot of Extension's impact on participants and the program's public value. Using a dialogical process, submitted stories are reviewed and valued based on a rubric. Stories that the reviewers felt met each rubric criteria, including conveying public value are then selected as the top. However, all submitted stories aid in the construction of Extension's rich programming, impact, and ultimately, its public value as an institution.

There are already extensive evaluation and communication efforts within Extension taking place on an ongoing basis. This project is unique in that it 1) gathers stories within a region, so the impact is geographic versus program-specific; 2) the stories are vetted through the MSC protocol, thus determining which stories illustrate public value and significant impact; 3) stories are gathered from many perspectives including participants, volunteers and staff; 4) effective stories address public value and also

include emotional appeal. Upon reading several of the MSC stories, a comprehensive picture of the impact Extension has on its constituents, communities and the common good emerges for readers. The stories can be shared individually or in sets to show a more holistic impact.

### **BRINKERHOFF'S SUCCESS STORYTELLING EVALUATION METHOD**

The story writing approach that influenced stories drafted by the evaluation team versus those submitted by staff or program participants drew on Brinkerhoff's success storytelling method (2002, 2005) used as an evaluation tool. This approach is intended to produce concrete evidence of the program impact (or lack thereof), through rich and verifiable descriptions of the impact provided by program participants and other key stakeholders. This method does not replace other evaluation efforts, but stories that convey the program process and impact can add a new dimension to the evaluation itself. Using the success storytelling method, Extension can pair stories about impact and change to evaluative data that triangulate the impact.

### **MSC PROCESS**

The graduate assistant evaluator and Central Region Leadership Team began soliciting stories in late September. The Leadership Team was instrumental in generating excitement and submissions. A description and sample outreach materials are included in the appendices of this report.

The first round of review took place on November 21, 2014. The Central Region Leadership Team included Kim Boyce, Sarah Chur, Tammy McCulloch, Nathan Winter (Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources), Anita Harris (Youth Development), Scott Chazdon (Community Vitality) and Margaret Hagenmuller in place of Mary Caskey (Family Development). The team reviewed stories, completing rubrics for each one in advance of the meeting. During the meeting, each rating was recorded, followed by a discussion of the merit of the stories. Of the 29 stories submitted, eighteen were selected to advance to the statewide review.

The statewide review was conducted on December 5, 2014. Reviewers included Bob Byrnes, Sarah Greening, and Extension's evaluation team, Alexis Troschinetz, Mary Marczak, Pamela Nippolt, Scott Chazdon, and Whitney Meredith. Similar to the regional review, stories were reviewed and rated using the same rubric in advance of the meeting. During the meeting, ratings were recorded and the merit of the stories was discussed. The group chose the top twelve stories as the most significant.

### **ABOUT EXTENSION'S CENTRAL REGION**

The Central Region was the first to participate in the MSC project. The region was chosen because Regional Directors, Sarah Chur, Tammy McCulloch and Kim Boyce volunteered and were able to steward the project with an understanding that it was the first attempt to collect MSC stories across Extension Centers within a region.

The Central Region Counties include: Stearns, Meeker, McCloud, Benton, Sherburne, Wright, Carver, Scott, Dakota, Hennepin, Anoka, Isanti, Chisago, Washington, and Ramsey. One benefit of starting the MSC project in this region was that it was in close proximity to the

Saint Paul Campus and the graduate research assistant who collected the stories. She was able to travel to regional meetings and conduct in-person interviews.

### STORY ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

At the late stage of gathering and writing stories, the MSC Evaluation Team, Scott Chazdon and Molly Illes developed an initial rubric intended to facilitate the story valuing process. The Extension Evaluation Team and Central Region Leadership Team reviewed the rubric and offered feedback. The rubric was developed to help guide the valuing process, making sure that public value was a key element in the top stories.

	Rating	Comments
Story provides evidence of the public value of the Extension's impact.		
Story provides evidence of the benefit of Extension research and education in addressing significant issues facing individuals, families, community groups, or small business.		
Story provides evidence of Extension's role in leveraging resources beyond Extension to address significant issues.		
Story provides evidence of Extension adapting to meet needs of diverse audiences to meet the changing needs of Minnesota.		
Story engages you to the point that you want to retell it (evokes pride, emotion, appreciation)		
<b>Total Rating</b>		

Extension's Strategic Plan was used as the basis from which to develop the rubric. However, upon further review of the rubric, the team amended it to reflect more of the public value in the story rating process. The matrix above contains the measures used in the Central Region review process from December 2014.

### MSC STORY META-ANALYSIS:

#### EXTENSION PUBLIC VALUE THEMES ACROSS STORIES

Across the 29 submitted stories, the following holistic themes about Extension emerged. When reading multiple stories about the initiatives across four Extension Centers throughout a geographic region, readers gain an understanding of the programmatic diversity and communities served.

*Extension adapts to meet the changing needs of the community.*

Some stories offer depictions of how Extension has adapted to meet the changing needs of

the community. Master Gardener programs, for example, take place in a juvenile detention center, a culturally and economically diverse neighborhood in Saint Paul, a hospital setting and a school. The malleability of volunteers and their willingness to meet the needs of the community—whoever and where ever that may be—is a strong theme among many of the 29 stories submitted.

***Story clearly articulates whether or not the program achieves its intended outcomes.***

The top stories chosen offered a description of the program itself, not merely testimonial from a participant. The story indicated what intended outcomes are and how the program achieves its outcomes. The unit of analysis for effective stories should be the program itself, not the participant or other stakeholder. It is the combination of perspectives from key stakeholders, coupled with rich program description and other evaluative data that create strong stories.

***Extension leverages partnerships to expand the delivery of research and information.***

Extension is able to expand its education through partnerships with other organizations through training. Story examples include: Minnesota Council on Economic Education, Pesticide Safety Education, and the Community Mentorship Program. By working with other organizations, Extension leverages partnerships for efficient delivery that may build program capacity in a way that may not otherwise happen. The impact of such partnerships not only creates research-based training programs, but also expands the program capacity within the partner organizations, offering in some cases an important spillover effect.

***Extension educators take action beyond their primary purpose.***

In a few examples, such as Davis-Kenning's story about her nutritional work at Journey Home in Sauk Rapids, the nutrition educator identified a significant concern within the organization related to unhealthy food service practices. She addressed the concern with staff and the result was a systemic change that will impact many people beyond the small group of program participants.

***Extension educators establish trust and respect in the community.***

Some program participants suggested that the Extension staff whom they interact with are people they rely on for support and information. A key example is the forage crop story in which a farmer stated that Extension Educator, Dan Martens, is programmed into his phone's speed dial because he respects and relies on Martens' advice. This story and others illustrate the respect and reputation Extension has with program participants, community members and organizational partners who associate Extension with important information and research.

***Extension programs meet the needs of underrepresented populations in important ways.***

Many of the stories including Teen Power, Frogtown Children's Garden, Nutritional Education at Neighborhood House, Silence the Violence, and the Cultural Exchange story offer evidence of how Extension serves diverse populations in the Central Region. Not only is Extension reaching out to new communities and underserved populations, but it is also tackling challenging issues such as racial and ethnic stereotypes in programs such as the Cultural Exchange.

## LESSONS LEARNED

During the story submission and writing stage, through the story review, there were several lessons learned about the process. These learnings will be incorporated into the second MSC project in the Northeast Region during 2015.

***Statewide programs are problematic*** for the MSC project because their focus is not as regional or county-specific as other programs. Statewide programming must be framed within the experience of individuals or groups who are tightly connected within a region or county. The impact of the programs must be experienced on a local level and that must be clearly conveyed in the story.

***Stories were written in different tones***, authored by several different people. Some stories are written in the first person and others in the third person. The testimonials submitted by participants were in some cases difficult to assess public value since they were focused on the participant experience and direct benefits. The next set of stories will standardize a third person voice and include more background about the program.

***A constraint of this project was that we looked at stories of programs and experiences within the last five years.*** For youth programming, it may be helpful to find graduates of 4-H or other programs who are now demonstrating skills learned through actions affecting people beyond the programming.

***Addressing public value in their stories was challenging*** for some stories. This is a skill that should be cultivated among staff and volunteers. The graduate assistant evaluator will work with storytellers to enhance this aspect of each story.

***Most Significant Change as a label for the project is inhibitive.*** Some storytellers were concerned about whether or not their stories were “significant” and whether they could depict true change. As the project moves to the second region, the project will continue using the MSC label, but also include language about public value and impacting the common good. After the second project is completed, the issue of the initiative’s label should be revisited. The stories collected are not intended to show causation, but to give people an opportunity to share about their experience and let Extension know about any actions they may have taken that impact people and community beyond program participants.

***The rubric was not available until after stories had been submitted.*** Although storytellers were given guidelines, the actual rubric was not available until early November, at which point most of the stories had been submitted. This was a limitation for the project because the rubric would likely have aided in guiding the storytelling process. Also, there was a strong emphasis on telling emotional stories initially. This shifted, in favor of creating a balance between emotional stories of personal impact and also illustrating public value. The review rubric will be made available at the onset of the next project to all storytellers.

### ***Balancing Emotion and Public Value***

A challenge with the Central Region MSC project initially was balancing the emotion in the story and also telling stories of public value. Some stories offer a moving testimonial from participants who felt the Extension programming changed their lives. These can be very powerful stories and evoke emotion. The impact on that individual may be palpable.



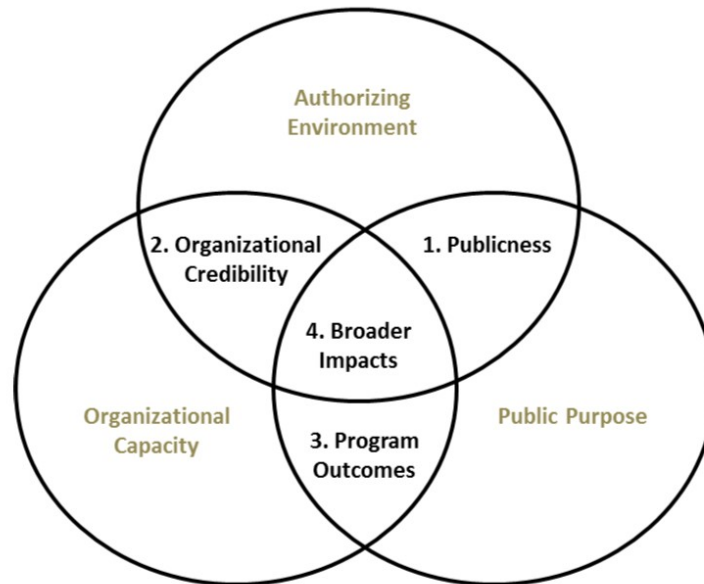
However, in this era of accountability and making the case for continued public funding, it is critical that all stories from Extension clearly address measurement strategy questions, interweaving public value throughout the storytelling process.

## **PUBLIC VALUE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW RUBRIC**

Identifying and communicating the public value of Extension’s programming is vital in making the case for sustaining public funding (Kalambokidis, Hinz & Chazdon, 2014). Public value is defined as programs that “induce participants to act in ways that benefit others in the community” (Kalambokidis, 2011, p. 1).

Mark Moore (1995) identified three challenges for managers of public programs: defining and measuring the larger public purpose, identifying the fit of the program with authorizer interests, and assessing the capacity of the delivery organization to produce public value. Chazdon and Paine (2014) created the EPV framework and identified four components of public value in evaluation. The four components are: 1) The “publicness” of the participant and the participant’s goals; 2) Organizational credibility, incorporating participant and stakeholder perceptions; 3) program outcomes, with an emphasis on the value gained by program participants; and 4) broader impacts (p. 100).

### ***The Public Value Strategic Triangle***



Chazdon & Paine, 2014

**Publicness** is at the intersection of Public Purpose and the Authorizing Environment. Publicness is defined as “the degree to which the program participant is oriented to public sector values, which may include fairness and justice issues and the production of public goods” (p. 106). Publicness can be measured based on participant characteristics, such as programs that reach underserved populations.

**Organizational Credibility** is at the intersection of Organizational Capacity and the Authorizing Environment. Organizational Credibility is defined as “participant and stakeholder perceptions of the quality of the public program, as well as the reputation of

the delivery organization” (p. 108). Program qualities include abilities of program staff, level of participant satisfaction, trust of program staff, and the responsiveness of the program to participant needs. Chazdon and Paine note that stakeholders change their perceptions based on performance of an organization, but in some cases, reputations are highly influenced by past events or cultural norms and are therefore less malleable. Public value is derived from reputation and therefore, this must be safeguarded and not taken for granted.

**Program Outcomes** are at the intersection of Organizational Capacity and Public Purpose. They are defined as the “benefits that the individual participant directly gains from consumption of the program. The outcomes are based on the goals and objectives of the program *and* the capacity of the organization to deliver a program that meets these goals” (p. 110). In contrast, program *impacts* focus more on results for the larger society. However, many aspects of program outcomes likely are still related to public value.

**Broader Impacts** are at the intersection of all three EPV challenges. They are defined as the “value generated directly for non-participants” (p. 112). For example, a value for people not directly participating in the program who nonetheless benefit from it. If a program is large and complex, the public may be unaware of the public value they receive.

For the Central Region MSC project, an effort was made to address the public value in each of the stories. During this process, some staff were able to effectively accomplish this, but in some stories the program’s public value was less apparent. For future public value storytelling efforts, we recommend integrating these components of evaluation for public value into the rubric used to write and assess powerful stories.

## DEVELOPING THE STORY

The first step in writing a public value impact story is gathering information from key program staff and program beneficiaries. The following questions are useful to guide this process.

- Who is the target beneficiary of the program? (Might be an individual, community organization, family, small business, this is likely the focus of your story)
- What is the problem the target beneficiary was experiencing?
- What is the program/education that helps the beneficiary solve the problem? What additional supporting information can you include such as program details, history of the program, recent changes to the program, etc.?
- How does the program participant solve the problem? If this program did not exist, would the same outcome(s) have been achieved?
- What is the result of the beneficiary’s action (successful or not)?

## BRINGING PUBLIC VALUE INTO THE STORY

The next step is to integrate public value into the story. Based on Chazdon and Paine’s components of public value, coupled with the meta-analysis from the Central Region’s Most Significant Change project in 2014, the following are suggestions for a storytelling rubric to integrate public value into the story writing process.

- How does the story demonstrate behavior changes that resulted from Extension programming? (Outcomes)
- How does the story demonstrate the trust and respect that Extension has established with its key audiences? (Organizational Credibility)
- How does the story demonstrate Extension programs, staff and volunteers meeting the needs of underrepresented populations in important ways? (Publicness)
- How does the story demonstrate Extension adapting to meet changing needs of its key audiences? (Publicness)
- How does the story demonstrate ways that Extension leverages organizations or partnerships to expand the delivery of research and education beyond initial program participants? (Impacts)
- How does the story demonstrate ways that Extension programming led to positive social, economic, environmental, cultural, health, or civic effects for public-serving organizations or communities in Minnesota? (Impacts)

## **STORY CREDIBILITY**

From concept through final story editing, story authors must adhere to the rigor of the evaluation process to make sure stories are credible and verifiable according to Brinkerhoff's (2005) approach. Interviews with stakeholders who are quoted or referenced in the story must be documented. The story should be reviewed by all stakeholders quoted or referenced in the story to ensure the program's portrayal resonates with them.

## **APPENDICES**

The appendices contain documents that guided the first MSC project. It is important to note that these documents will be updated for the Northeast Region MSC Project taking place in 2015.

## **OUTREACH REVIEW**

Central Region Leadership Team was reached out to staff across the region and encouraged them to submit stories. It was intentionally focused on the Central Region versus a broader outreach effort. This led to some confusion for program managers who serve multiple regions and were not directly informed about this project. However, targeting the engagement for the project is important so that the stories remain focused on the geographic region.

Approximately 40 people attended a live webinar on September 30. The webinar was presented by Molly Illes, the graduate student evaluator (GSE). Regional Directors emailed staff and encouraged their participation in the webinar. In addition to the questions posed during the webinar, there were about six inquiries following the webinar. It was worthwhile presenting via webinar. The webinar was also recorded and the link was sent to all staff in the region. The duration of the webinar was about 20 minutes. It might be useful to make

brief, five minute videos to describe the project, inform about submitting a story, and explain how to balance storytelling among public value, emotion and program context.

In addition to other outreach efforts, there was a story telling guide and brochure. These communication tools were emailed to staff within the region. During the next MSC project, the GSE will develop a webpage to house this information. There was also a unique email address created for the project to track responses moving forward. The intention with these elements is continuity across regions.

During the Central Region process, the team solicited nominations. This worked to a degree but in the end, attending meetings and connecting with people who felt they had stories to tell yielded more actual submissions.

In some cases, staff contacted the GSE with ideas, but did not give enough background about the program, its context, its participant demographics or other important details. For the next round of storytelling, the stories will be worked through collaboratively between the GSE and staff for a more efficient process.

Thank you letters were sent to all staff and volunteers who submitted stories.

## **STORY FORMAT GUIDE**

Stories for the Central Region MSC Project were formatted using the general Extension info sheet template (gold, small banner) from the Extension Brand Identity templates. The body text font is Lucinda Bright 10.5. The Most Significant Change header font is 10 point Calibri in maroon, all caps. The story title is 12 or 14 point font in red bold. The stories were formatted using Microsoft Publisher, then saved as a PDF for distribution.

## **MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORYTELLING GUIDE**

The following information was given to staff who expressed interest in submitting a story. This will change considerably for the Northeast Region. However, it is included here since it corresponds to the stories articulated for the Central Region. It is important to show the story telling process progression moving forward.

The second section regarding how the story embodies the values of Extension was adapted from Extension's strategic plan.

### **Story Submission Guidelines**

- Describe who was involved, what happened, where and when.
- Include enough detail to give a clear description for someone not familiar with your project.
- Be clear about your outcomes to make it possible to follow up later to see if the change has continued.
- Stories may be up to, but not more than 1,000 words. All stories will be edited to fit onto a single-spaced, double-sided page.

- Be sure to submit 1-3 photos of the program in action. We would like to include a photo with every story.

**Consider how your story embodies the values of Extension:**

- Stories of how Extension research and education addressed significant issues facing individuals, families, community groups, small businesses; may include behavior change to improve social, economic and environmental conditions.
- Stories of collaborative efforts, illuminating how Extension operates as an efficient, effective and integrated organization.
- Stories of participants exploring their own talent or emerging empowered as leaders, what that new-found leadership meant to them and how they have become leaders in their own communities.
- Stories about supporting a culture of diversity and inclusion.
- Stories related to a critical response your program or staff addressed, expressing how your response assisted people in crisis such as in the aftermath of a natural disaster or food-related emergency.

## **MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE STORY SUBMISSION REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

Please use Microsoft Word to submit your story. Include responses to the following questions in 1,000 words or less. Also include 1 - 3 pictures with the submission if possible.

### **Storyteller Contact Information**

Storyteller's Name:

Email:

Phone:

Office Address:

Office City/State/Zip:

Program Location:

Stories should include responses to the questions below. Remember that it is the **emotional impact that differentiates a story from a program description.**

### **Story Elements**

Who is the highlighted participant of the program? (Might be an individual, community organization, family, small business, this is likely the focus of your story)

1. What is the problem the participant was experiencing?
2. Whom does the participant connect with (Extension program coordinator, staff or volunteer) to help solve the problem? Who else was involved?
3. What is the program/education that helps the beneficiary solve the problem?
4. How does the program participant solve the problem? If this program did not exist, would the same outcome(s) have been achieved?
5. What is the result of the beneficiary's action (successful or not)?
6. What additional supporting information can you include such as program details, history of the program, recent changes to the program, etc.?

## MSC STORY REVIEW PROCESS



Story submissions were received later than planned, so the regional review was rescheduled for a week later than originally scheduled. The timeline will be adjusted to allow for more time between the submission deadline and regional review meeting since two weeks was insufficient.

Stories were sent to reviewers with the rubric one week prior to the review meeting. Each reviewer was assigned between eight and ten stories.

Reviewers completed a rubric for each story, totaled their ratings and reported the average at the beginning of the review meeting. Stories were then averaged across reviewers. Totals were ranked high to low. Based on the story rating averages, each story was grouped into three categories: low (not passed to statewide review/eliminated from the top stories), high (stories rated high across reviewers, requiring minimal deliberation to consider as the top stories) and then the stories in the middle. During the dialogue, reviewers remarked on supporting points of why they rated the story and why they may or may not support its advancement as a top story. It is through this part of the process, through dialogue and deliberation, drawing on Extension's core values, that follows the MSC protocol.

In addition to the consideration of the story's content, reviewers discussed stories across Extension Centers and also geography. It was critical to the process and story outcome that each Center would have at least two stories in the top set.

## MSC STORY RUBRIC

Story Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Story ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Please review each story you are assigned and use the following rubric to score the story on 1 to 5 scale (1=poor, 2=fair, 3=good, 4=very good, 5=excellent) before coming to the review meeting.

	Rating	Comments
Story provides evidence of the public value of the Extension's impact.		
Story provides evidence of the benefit of Extension research and education in addressing significant issues facing individuals, families, community groups, or small business.		
Story provides evidence of Extension's role in leveraging resources beyond Extension to address significant issues.		
Story provides evidence of Extension adapting to meet needs of diverse audiences to meet the changing needs of Minnesota.		
Story engages you to the point that you want to retell it (evokes pride, emotion, appreciation)		
<b>Total Rating</b>		

Please total the rating and bring one rubric for each story you're assigned to the review meeting.

*Thank you for participating in the Most Significant Change story review process!*



## CITATIONS

- Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2002). *The success case method*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Brinkerhoff, R. O. (2005) The success case method: A strategic evaluation approach to increasing value and effect of training. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 7, 86-101.
- Chazdon, S.A. & Paine, N. (2014). Evaluating for Public Value: Clarifying the Relationship Between Public Value and Program Evaluation. *Journal of Human Sciences and Extension*, 2(2), 100-119, retrieved online from [http://media.wix.com/ugd/c8fe6e\\_8b2458db408640e580cfbeb5f8c339ca.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/c8fe6e_8b2458db408640e580cfbeb5f8c339ca.pdf) .
- Dart, J. & Davies, R. (2003). A dialogical, story-based evaluation tool: the Most Significant Change Technique. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 21(2), 137-155.
- Kalambokidis, L., Hinz, L., & Chazdon, S. (2014). Using economic principles to show how Extension programs create public value. Accepted for publication in J. Bryson, B. Crosby, & L. Bloomberg, (Eds.), *Creating public value in practice: Advancing the common good in a multi-sector, shared-power, no-one-wholly-in-charge world*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press.
- Kalambokidis, L. (2011). Spreading the word about Extension's public value. *Journal of Extension*, 49(2) retrieved online from <http://www.joe.org/joe/2011april/a1.php>.
- Kalambokidis, L. (2003). Identifying the public value in programs. Paper presented at the American Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting, retrieved from <http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/22005/1/sp03ka02.pdf>.
- Knowledge Sharing Toolkit. (2014). Most Significant Change. Retrieved from <http://www.kstoolkit.org/Most+Significant+Change>.