

# 2008 Annual Report

## POLK COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION



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### **Our Mission:**

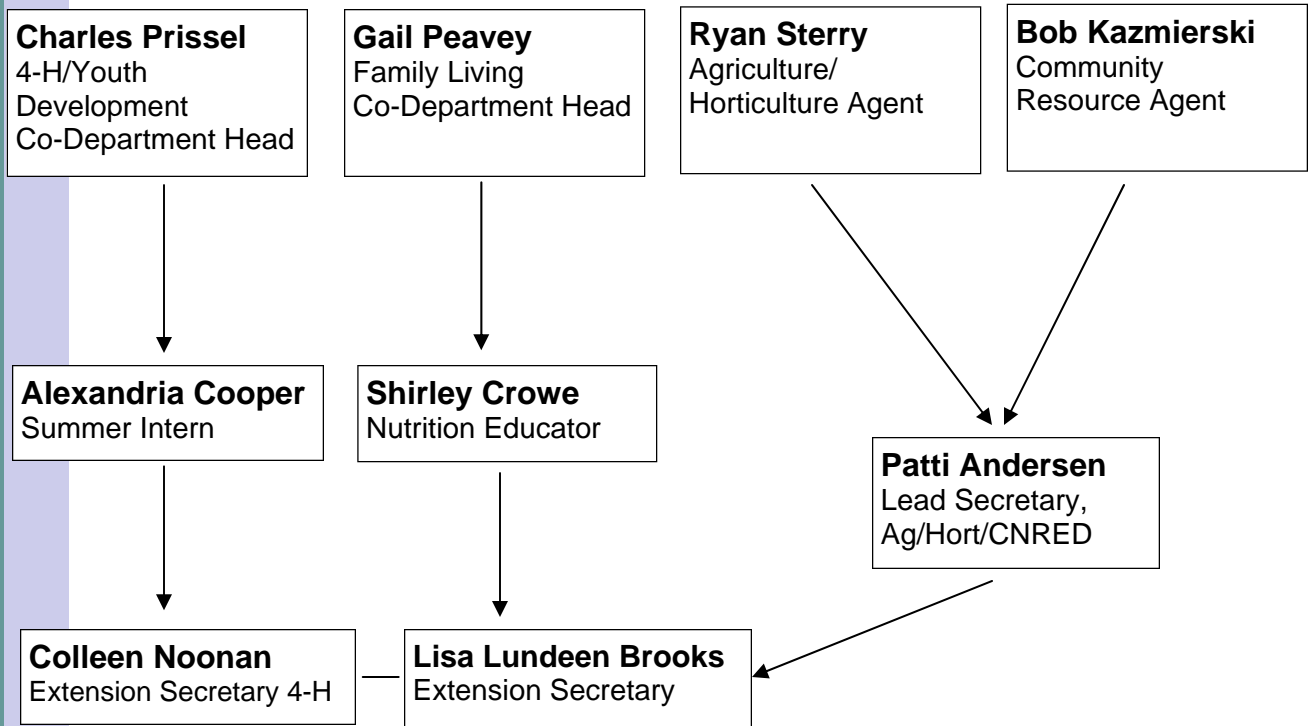
To provide Polk County residents with access to university resources and opportunities to engage in lifelong learning, wherever they live and work. Programs support agriculture and agri-business, community and economic development, natural resources, family living and youth development. Cooperative Extension develops practical educational programs tailored to Polk County needs and based on university knowledge and research.

Cooperative Extension  
University of Wisconsin

- Polk County Board
- Agriculture & Extension Education Committee
  - Larry Jepsen – Committee Chair
  - Diane Stoneking
  - Dean K. Johansen
  - Kathryn Kienholz
  - Ted Johnson-FSA

## Organizational Chart for UW-Extension

### Polk County Office University of Wisconsin Extension



## **The mission of the University of Wisconsin - Extension - Cooperative Extension**

*Helping the people of Wisconsin apply University research, knowledge and resources to meet their educational needs wherever they live and work.*

University of Wisconsin - Extension, Cooperative Extension represents a unique three way partnership of federal, state and county government to provide local citizens access to the Land Grant University System. Partners include the United State Department of Agriculture, the University of Wisconsin and Polk County. By statute, the UW Extension program is a unit of county government and is the local source of educational programming from the University of Wisconsin System.

Extension staff apply research-based information and processes, a variety of educational delivery methods and local collaborations to strengthen the lives of Polk County citizens. Our work in agriculture, community development, family living and youth development is based on local community needs, experiences and assets.

Extension educators are University faculty and staff, and their classroom is the County. They provide practical information through satellite programs, videos, seminars, workshops, newsletters, radio, television, newspapers, bulletins, field tours, on-site visits, personal conferences, distance education, learning technologies, telephone and Extension affiliated groups such as 4-H, HCE and Master Gardeners. Program support is provided by over 90 UW specialists and other

**People in Wisconsin and Polk County continue to reaffirm the value of UW—Extension and the Wisconsin idea.**

The Wisconsin idea is a philosophy embraced by the University of Wisconsin, which holds that the boundaries of the university should be the boundaries of the state, and that research conducted at the University of Wisconsin should be applied to solve problems and improve health, quality of life, the environment and agriculture for all citizens of the state. The University of Wisconsin and its partners have been guided by the Wisconsin Idea for over 100 years.

## **UW—Extension Polk County Program Areas:**

The goals and objectives of each faculty and staff member is to provide quality educational programs and research-based information to the people of Polk County to help them gain the understanding, capabilities and skills necessary for addressing local issues.

The University of Wisconsin Extension support staff provides essential resources and talents that help our office reach our mission. Our support staff team includes: Patti Jo Andersen, Lead Secretary/CNRED/Ag Secretary, Colleen Noonan, 4-H Secretary and Lisa Lundeen Brooks, Family Living/CNRED Secretary.

### **Agriculture and Natural Resources**

- Teach sustainable farming practices and farm safety
- Provide resources and expertise for farmstead planning and modernization
- Help producers and agri-businesses with farm financial analysis and improve profitability

### **Home and Commercial Horticulture**

- Environmental awareness in the yard and garden
- Train Master Gardeners and diagnose plant insect & disease problems

### **4-H, Youth Development**

- Experiences that allow youth to explore careers and develop workplace skills
- Activities that teach science, engineering, technology, nutrition, and environment awareness
- Community-service projects that build planning and leadership skills while helping foster awareness and helping others
- Providing leadership development opportunities for youth to grow into tomorrow's leaders

### **Family Living**

- Help children, parents and individuals make healthy choices about diet, nutrition and exercise
- Enhancing family financial, literacy and security across the life span.
- Provide resources and workshops on child development, parent education, divorce education, inter-generational relationships and care-giving.

### **Community, Natural Resource and Economic Development**

- Bring services that facilitate collaboration, local leadership development and community-based problem-solving
- Provide educational resources for civic engagement and partnerships in local government decision-making.
- Provide education in land use, environmental protection, and bio-energy
- Enhance local economic health, business development, and quality of life

## Adding Value To Our Communities

### Extension - Your link to the University of Wisconsin

*Connecting county residents to the faculty, research and resources of the University of Wisconsin*

**Financial Education** - In response to the rising number of people filing for bankruptcy, UW Extension Family Living conducted training and certification through the US Bankruptcy Trustees Office to provide credit counseling and debtor education. The in-service sessions included resources and delivery approaches to help local residents that have filed bankruptcy learn techniques and develop skills for managing future finances.

**Applied Research** - Applied research offers timely production information and a local connection to the recommendations of the University. Examples of local applied research include forage quality monitoring in the spring, soybean aphid and rust monitoring, and inter-seeding trials for improving pastures. As a result of these programs, producers are better able to harvest alfalfa at the proper time, understand treatment thresholds for treating soybean fields and better select species to plant to improve pasture yields.

**Specialists** – Specialists from several departments in the College of Agriculture from both UW-Madison and UW-River Falls are routinely in Polk County. These specialists bring the latest information on their applied research and industry trends to group meetings, plus do one-on-one consultations. Examples of specialist contributions to Polk County in 2008 include consultations on livestock facility design, helping families form farm business arrangements and farm transition plans, research updates in dairy management, and development of nutrient management plans. New to 2008, the Polk County UWEX agriculture program was able to offer a 12 week course for beginning farmers through the UW-Madison Short Course. Previously, students would have had to travel to Madison to participate in this course.

### We Maximize the County Budget by Sharing Resources

*The county's local share of the statewide Cooperative Extension budget—about 27 percent—is leveraged to the utmost through shared resources with our state and federal partners.*

**Federal Resources, Local Benefits** - Polk County Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) is an annual federally funded program that responds to the diverse needs and resources of limited income families by implementing community based nutrition education programs. Educational programs are offered in three Polk County Schools, WIC sites and Human Service classes for food stamp clients.

**Grant Writing** - CNRED Agent, as member of the Polk County Renewable Energy Committee, was asked to pursue the Office of Energy Independence 25x25 grant on behalf of Polk County. The completion of this research will provide Polk County the ability to prioritize projects and further develop and adhere to the 25% by 2025 Plan. Named the "Polk County Energy Independence Team", this collaboration of communities has the institutional knowledge and working environment to ensure the successful completion of the program.

## Adding Value To Our Communities

**Volunteers Maximize Resources** - 694 4-H youth enrolled in 4515 projects in 2008. Three hundred and sixty-one oriented and trained adult volunteers worked with these youth in 2008. Training ensures volunteers know how to plan and lead project meetings and educational events with age appropriate activities, how to help youth set realistic goals and ways to recognize youth so that everyone involved has a positive experience. These volunteers help youth grow into caring competent adults to lead our communities tomorrow.

According to the Independent Sector, the average volunteer gives two to four hours of volunteer time each week. Using the current minimum wage value of \$6.50 per hour, Polk County 4-H Volunteers gave an estimated \$488,072 worth of time to the youth of Polk County.

**Value Added Investment in Our Youth** - Working cooperatively with county government and UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development, the Polk County 4-H Leaders Federation awarded \$16,850 of post secondary education scholarships to youth of Polk County in 2008. Through scholarship assistance, youth will gain work force skills to benefit themselves and their communities. The 4-H Leaders Federation invests in the non-formal education of youth in Polk County with an annual budget of over \$50,000, providing youth with educational training opportunities and leadership development opportunities.

### **We Offer Proactive “Prevention Education,” Saving County Resources**

*Many challenges faced by communities, businesses, neighborhoods and families are expensive to fix. They are, however, far less expensive to prevent through a variety of well-designed educational programs.*

#### **Strengthening Families/Individuals in Relationships and Co-Parenting Education—**

The economic and emotional costs of marriage and divorce are significant not only for those individuals but the society that support them. Researchers have found that children who experience divorce and separation are often more susceptible to developing emotional and behavioral difficulties than children who do not experience divorce. Family Living Agent met with Polk County Circuit Judges, District Attorney, Family Court Commissioner and Child Protection Supervisor to develop a program that would minimize parental conflict and to keep the children out of the middle of parental issues. This course is mandated for all parents with minor children. Results of the 2008 evaluations suggest parents can improve their ability to effectively cope with divorce as well as support their children through this process and thereby help mediate the impact of divorce on children.

**Environmental Protection** - Polk County and the Land and Water Department secured grants to teach farmers to develop their own nutrient management plans. Programs such as this help farmers both better protect the environment and improve their profitability. Through this grant, nutrient management plans are being developed for 11 farms and nearly 3000 acres.

## Adding Value To Our Communities

**Supporting Healthy Lifestyles** - Polk County Family Living program secured a grant for training and purchase of the evidence-based Tufts University Strong Women Program. The goal of this program is to improve the health and well being of women. Polk County Aging Director and Polk County Family Living Agent partnered to teach 24 sessions to Polk County employees. Participants that completed the post-session assessment documented improvement in strength, endurance, balance and flexibility and also reported goals for healthier eating and making strength training a life-long commitment.

## We Bring Unique Services to Polk County

*The local extension office helps people in Polk County acquire knowledge and skills to solve local problems to enhance the quality of life in their families, neighborhoods, communities and businesses.*

**Facilitation/Collaboration Skills** - CNRED Agent designed and facilitated four strategic planning workshops for Home and Community Educators (HCE) of Polk County, Farm to Community Cooperative (FCC), Inc., Family Resource Center (FRC) and Polk County Renewable Energy Committee. During these sessions, he directed a process that helped the group identify its core values, mandates and redefine its mission. Using a confidential survey, the group was able to identify its organizational issues. Thereafter, through a brain writing technique, participants were able to identify and prioritize strategies that will enable them to address budgetary and staffing issues over the next year. In particular, the organization has action plans to recruit new members and increase capacity in the short term.

**Community Education** - Last winter, 18 new Master Gardeners were trained to add the 30 already involved in the Polk County Master Gardener Association. Participants receive 36 hours of classroom instruction plus receive two comprehensive resource manuals. We are able to offer this training for \$120, while similar classes through the University and Technical Colleges cost over \$400. In exchange for this training, Master Gardeners are asked to contribute 24 hours in community service projects. In 2008, Master Gardeners contributed over 700 hours of community service to Polk County.

**Youth Science Engineering/Technology Development** - In an effort to provide youth with non-formal science, engineering and technology experiences and to address the global need for these experiences as a necessary training ground for our youth, Polk County joined other counties throughout our state and nationally in working to provide opportunities. In 2008, seventeen 4-H clubs promoted the science, engineering and technology aspects of 4-H during national 4-H week with community displays. 4-H Ambassadors participated in the national science experiment learning about polymers; and Ambassadors hosted thirty-three youth and adults to the Science Museum in St. Paul where youth learned hands-on about robotics and mechanics along with many other science related topics. Project leaders work to highlight and incorporate science related topics while working with 4-H youth.

## Adding Value To Our Communities

### We Enhance Local Economic Development

*UW-Extension educational programs help Polk County capitalize on opportunities that bring in new money and retain and enhance current profitability.*

**Service Learning** - Service learning takes community service opportunities to a new level of benefit for youth as well as the community. A good example of this is demonstrated through work between 4-H Ambassador Youth, UW-Extension and the Clear Lake Library with the traveling Smithsonian Exhibition "Between Fences". In service learning projects, youth have input at all levels and provide leadership in program development and implementation. For this project, 4-H youth served on the planning committee overseeing the necessary behind the scenes work in bringing this display to Polk County. Their input directly influenced the design of a promotional brochure which was distributed in a fourteen county area. The youth helped raise community funds to cover program expenses and were trained to be tour guides for school groups and visitors. Over 2150 people visited the educational display while it visited Polk County in May of 2008.

**Local Leadership Development** - In May 2008, the third Polk-Burnett Leadership Academy class graduated and presented their community projects. This multi-county leadership program is comprehensive examination into various community issues within the Polk-Burnett area as well as opportunities to learn and practice leadership skills through a required class project. The fifteen graduates reported marked improvement in their abilities to take on leadership roles in the community, personal relationships, and at work/school. Of the 15 participants, nine presented community development projects that are currently being implemented.

**Business Development** - In collaboration with SBDC director, this educator designed and delivered monthly Small Business Consultation Workshops. In 2008, 32 entrepreneurs, start-up ventures, and existing businesses received consultation. Six of the 32 have enrolled in the SBDC sponsored and subsidized business planning class at UW-River Falls.

## Department Goals and Issues

Polk County has strong rural roots but it continues to be influenced by the urban Twin Cities Metropolitan area. The county serves as a bedroom community, with many residents traveling to the metro area for employment. Population growth has made land use issues and youth and family needs strong program areas for UW—Extension. To meet the needs of an ever changing Polk County, it is vital that a strong Extension resource base be maintained to meet the ever changing needs of Polk County Society.

Changes within the UW Extension Office in 2009 will include the elimination of one FTE support staff position. Agent programming will be affected with loss of this valuable assistance, however, we will do our best to meet the ever changing needs of Polk County residents.

Family issues will continue to be a top priority during these tough economic and social times and the demand for resources is on the rise. Family Living Programs operate on the principle that many of the challenges facing families and communities are far less expensive to prevent than to fix. Well designed educational programs help families better manage their financial resources, improve their skills as parents and co-parents, and create an environment where strong stable and secure relationships nurture the well being of family members, maintain healthier lifestyles, and contribute to their communities. By improving people's lives, family living programs reduce the economic and social service costs to local governments and make Polk County communities stronger.

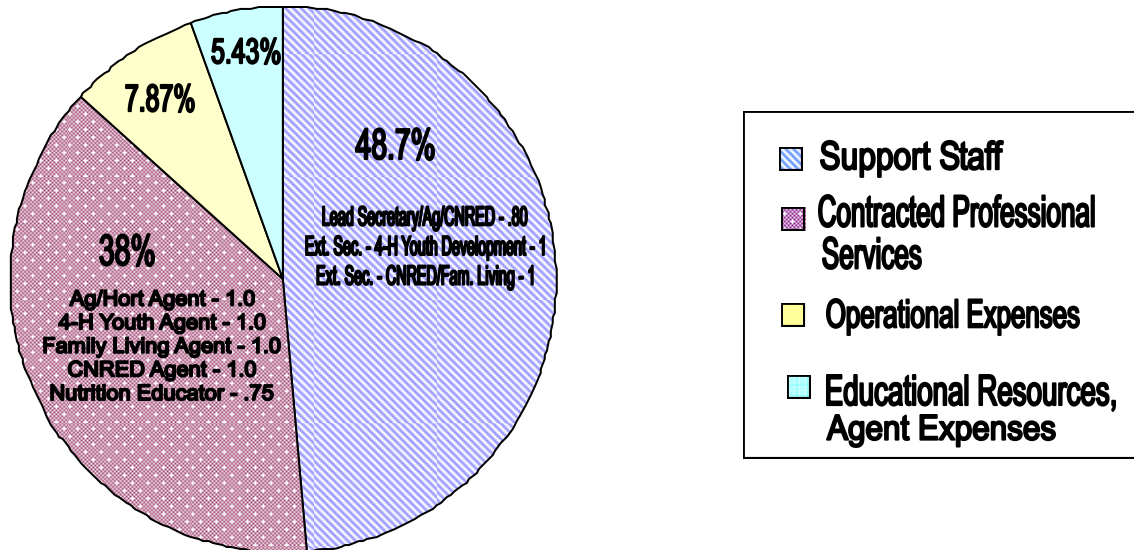
Strategic planning for the county can be a management technique which builds upon the political decision making process, and provides a means for the county to chart their future in a proactive rather than in a reactive manner. UWEX can assist the county as well as other local organizations in developing and implementing planning tools that enable governing bodies become more effective and efficient.

With a growing shortage of fossil-fuel based energy and advancements in technology, the integration of renewable energy and conservation practices poses real opportunities and challenges for area residents. UWEX can provide resources, research and planning tools to provide local communities and individuals a well-informed understanding of renewable energy and energy efficiency practices.

Youth are the future leaders of tomorrow. Providing youth with opportunities to learn and develop leadership skills in a safe productive environment is essential. 4-H Youth Development helps train tomorrow's leaders; youth are elected to offices at the club and county level where they provide direct input into the decision making process. Youth take on leadership rolls in projects, training and teaching younger members; all the while developing and honing growth skills in themselves. It is essential that youth have testing grounds like these to become tomorrows leaders.

Agriculture continues to be a leading industry in Polk County, accounting for \$200 million in economic activity per year. Nearly 3000 jobs in Polk County are directly involved in agriculture and the industries that serve the agricultural community. The face of agriculture in Polk County is changing as an aging farm operator population retires and the next generation faces tough economic conditions. Rather than promote one size of farm or type of production over another, agricultural programming through UWEX aims to assist producers of all sizes and types by providing timely research-based information in a package tailored to fit the producer's individual needs. Demand for resources is on the rise for transfer of farm ownership to the next generation, farmland preservation, animal health and welfare, and crop production in the face of adverse weather and new diseases.

## UWEX 2008 Budget—\$300,400 1.5% of the 2008 Polk County Operating Levy



### University of Wisconsin—Extension and Wisconsin Counties A Partnership to Fund Local Extension Education

#### County Contribution:

Employee salary 40%  
 Fringe benefits 40%  
 Office facilities  
 Office support staff  
 Expense account (mileage, meals, Lodging, registration fees, inc.)  
 Capital equipment  
 Professional development support  
 Postage

#### UWEX Contribution:

Employee salary 60%  
 Fringe benefits 60%  
 Wisline satellite networks/other technology services  
 Campus based specialists & access to UW system resources  
 Expenses for selected training and administrative meetings  
 Computer/technology training/support  
 Professional development programs and support  
 Postage allocation  
 Employee assistance  
 Hiring and recruitment services, financial support, orientation program  
 Grants and contract coordination  
 Publications, videos, software