

Manitowoc County CPAG Success Story

The Manitowoc County UW-Extension office staff initiated an office advisory committee in September 1999. Although the title and members have changed throughout the years, the office continues to use the model. UW-Extension Educators use the expertise of the Citizen Partner Advisory Group (CPAG) to strengthen their community networks, and the CPAG members utilize the Educators to help them connect with people and information of interest to them professionally and personally. The collaborations have resulted in broadening the visibility, understanding, and educational outreach of the Manitowoc County UW-Extension staff.

An example of collaborative work is with Betsy Alles, a CPAG member and Director of the Manitowoc -Two Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce. After getting to know Manitowoc County UW-Extension Dairy Agent Scott Gunderson's organizational and dairy industry expertise, she invited him to be a Chamber Board Member. This has resulted in considerable visibility to the County's dairy industry, and of Scott's research and work. In 2006, Scott accepted the Manitowoc - Two Rivers Area Chamber of Commerce Cooperation Award, so designated for the hours of work invested in the local Discovery Farm project.

Manitowoc County has a Discovery Farm facility housed on Karl Klessig's Saxon Homestead Farm. Karl, a CPAG member, dairy farmer, and an agricultural activist, invited members to take a fieldtrip to the facility. Eric Cooley, Discovery Farm Outreach Specialist, facilitated the tour speaking about his work which focuses on natural resources issues in Eastern Wisconsin with an emphasis on surface water run-off and tile line drainage.



CPAG members appreciated the opportunity to get away from the typical meeting table venue in order to tour the local facility of which they might not otherwise have known about or visited. CPAG and UW-Extension staff members gained the experience of seeing UW-Extension research in action. This hands-on approach with the CPAG members was an appreciated educational experience, one of which everyone could talk about with a greater understanding and enthusiasm.

Manitowoc County UW-Extension will continue to utilize the advisory committee approach, initiated nearly a decade ago, and encourage other UW-Extension offices to hop in a van to tour the county to give CPAG members a hands-on look at some of the work being done by office staff members. The Manitowoc County staff will feature youth and families on its next stop later this year.