

Extension Connections with Northwest Iowa Economic Development 2006

Shaver Manufacturing: Shaver Manufacturing in Graettinger, is a leading manufacturer of fencing equipment, post drivers, stump grinders and log splitters. The company was developing a new 36 inch log splitter and needed assistance in testing the new product and making design improvements in order to have a successful product launch. The Center for Industrial Research and Service (CIRAS) provided testing and design input that resulted in a product that could be quickly brought to market, thus increasing revenues for the company.

Leaders Forum Building Partnerships for Regional Economic Development Efforts: By partnering with companies like Touchstone Energy, the Iowa Farm Bureau and over 50 participants from 13 communities in NW Iowa., Extension was able to pilot a new economic development program called *The Leaders Forum*. Through a six-part educational series, Extension focused on bringing the right people to the table to begin an economic discussion group with a plan and a purpose. By addressing economic needs as a region, the Leaders Forum is educating community leaders with research-based information and generating ideas and solutions that are being shared and expanded on between NW Iowa communities.

Quality Childcare Businesses for Hispanic Families: A healthy economy requires strong businesses and productive workers. Child care not only fuels that strength, it's an industry that provides positive short-term returns. By offering the Child Net program in Spanish, Woodbury County Extension has been able to teach 11 Hispanic families how to start a quality child care business in their own homes. Woodbury County is now planning a second session of the training.

Raccoon Valley Biodiesel: Raccoon Valley Biodiesel LLC in Storm Lake contacted CIRAS to explore the possibility of building a biodiesel plant. CIRAS researched and prepared a feasibility study on the biodiesel industry for the company. Based on the findings, Raccoon Valley is preparing to take the next steps towards building a new plant, which could produce increased sales in excess of \$78 million.

Plymouth County Lightens Up: Over 600 individuals participated on 90 teams in Lighten Up LeMars, a local effort in the LeMars community to participate in Lighten Up Iowa. Local businesses, including Wells Dairy, Harkers Distribution, and Floyd Valley Hospital, encouraged their employees to participate. Blue Cross Blue Shield found that participation in fitness programs led to fewer and lower long-term medical claims, less absenteeism, and the employees' perceived personal productivity and job/life satisfaction levels were higher. "Lighten Up LeMars" provided citizens a practical approach to weight loss and exercise programs with many success stories still being reported.

Bringing the Dairy Industry to NW Iowa: Seventeen families and individuals from the Netherlands were greeted by NW Iowa dairy farmers and ISU Extension representatives as they made their way through the NW Iowa portion of a regional tour of Iowa communities and dairy farms. Extension worked in partnership with Iowa's New Family Farm Project to recruit families for this tour. With over 250 dairy farms located in the 20 county region of NW Iowa, the area is an attractive prospect for international dairy producers looking to relocate and/or expand their dairy operations. According to the Western Iowa Dairy Coalition and the 2.8 percent coalition – Iowa is still shipping in 25% of the milk it needs to supply its processors. "This 25 percent shows a real opportunity for existing farms to have continued markets and for new farms to come into our communities," said Chris Mondak ISU Extension Dairy Field Specialist. "On average, a dairy farm can produce as many as 12 off-farm jobs. Studies indicate that a single dairy cow can generate over \$13,000 in economic activity."

FB4P in Holstein: CIRAS is partnering with the USDA Office of Energy Policy and New Uses (OEPNU) to develop and implement the Federal Biobased Products Preferred Procurement Program (FB4P). Established by

the 2002 Farm Bill, this program is designed to support the emerging bioeconomy by opening up potential federal markets for biobased products. CIRAS is working with Iowa manufacturers to positively position their products to take advantage of this developing program. One such company is Four All Seasons located in Holstein, which produces natural biobased fertilizers.

SoyPOWER: SoyPOWER® is marketed by one of Iowa's largest grain cooperatives, West Central Cooperative. West Central is the leader in the biodiesel field in plant construction, production and marketing. West Central requested internal auditor training from CIRAS in becoming certified to the new national biodiesel industry quality standard, BQ-9000. CIRAS provided training for internal audits, a pre-certification audit, and advice on implementing the BQ-9000 standard. The plant became the second company certified to BQ-9000 in April 2005. As a result, sales are expected to increase 30% with cost savings of \$200,000, 12 jobs saved and 5 new jobs created. Today, West Central is one of seven BQ-9000 Accredited plants in the U.S.

Carroll's Regional Entrepreneurs Association: The Regional Entrepreneurs Association (REA) was organized October 17, 2005 for the purpose of introducing an Entrepreneurial culture in rural communities. As a result of successfully organizing REA, Carroll was selected as one of four communities in Iowa for the MyEntre.net program. Ten participating business owners expanded their business. Seventeen business owners credit REA for giving them a business idea. Three stated an economic impact of over \$1,000 and thirty-three members said REA was an effective way to network with other entrepreneurs.

Sioux Rubber & Urethane: Sioux Rubber & Urethane in Sioux City specializes in the application of rubber and urethane to industrial parts and components. The plant contacted CIRAS for assistance in implementing an ISO 9000:2000 Quality Management System. In July 2005, the company became certified. As a result of CIRAS' assistance, the company believes this certification confirms to customers that they are doing everything they can to ensure their products meet quality requirements.

Medieval Glass Industries (Iowa) Inc.: Medieval Glass Industries (Iowa) Inc. is located in Estherville. The company is a manufacturer of decorative glass for doors, transoms, windows and cabinets. They requested assistance from CIRAS in developing their ISO 9000:2000 Quality Management System. As a result, the company is in a better position to increase sales, plus has enhanced their process for continuous improvement.

Teaching Small Businesses to Access eCommerce: Over 60 of Iowa's small business owners and entrepreneurs have been taught how they can use the internet to make their businesses more profitable via the Access eCommerce program presented by ISU Extension to Communities and Economic Development. The Access eCommerce curriculum, which was developed by the University of Minnesota's economics department, was purchased by ISU Extension in mid-2005, and delivery of the program was initiated in Northwest.

Seminars Improve Swine Producer Profitability: Pig health and productivity inside a swine housing facility is highly dependent on operator ability to set and adjust the environmental controls. Two separate workshops were held on February 2006 for 70 producers, veterinarians and agricultural professionals. Material learned from the workshop was immediately put into practice. Post workshop reports from participants are claiming pigs reach market weight up to 3 weeks sooner. This has a tremendous impact on the pig welfare and cost of production. Thirty-four out of 39 (87%) respondents estimate over \$1000 benefit from information learned at the seminar. Two thirds of the respondents sited more than \$2500, and about half benefited by more than \$5000.

Youth Reached Through 4-H Club Programming and School Enrichment: Over 75% of the youth in Pocahontas County are reached through ISU Extension programming. In addition to the eleven 4-H clubs, attendance at programs in school, after school and youth workshops totaled 1,709. These students learned skills ranging from in rocketry, global positioning systems, to leadership, and citizenship. Extension's investment in the youth of Pocahontas County is helping to improve today's quality of life while developing youth leadership skills that will guarantee future quality of life and economic successes for Pocahontas residents.

For more information, contact your County Extension Education Director or visit the Iowa State University Extension website, www.extension.iastate.edu