# Statement of Professional Contributions and Scholarship

One of my first goals as Jackson County Agriculture Agent was to familiarize myself with the diverse agricultural enterprises and population demographics of the County. I met with farm groups, associations, and committees, giving me an opportunity to survey their needs. This, along with a formal Jackson County Agricultural Survey I conducted, illuminated the diversity of educational needs of farmers in Jackson County (Exhibit 1).

Located in west-central Wisconsin, Jackson County has 258,000 acres of farmland and 950 farms. The average dairy herd is 88 cows and average farm size is 270 acres. In 2011, 70,000 acres were planted into corn and soybeans, 4,000 acres in small grains, and 18,000 acres in alfalfa (National Agricultural Statistics Service). Dairy is Jackson County's largest agriculture enterprise with $45.5 million in sales. Jackson County leads Wisconsin in cut Christmas tree production, and is third in fruit and berry production with $28.3 million in sales. Other important enterprises include sheep and lambs, pigs, poultry, and beef cattle each ranking in the top 12 among Wisconsin counties; nursery and greenhouse production ranks 14$^{th}$ (2007 Census of Agriculture).

The population of Jackson County was 19,886 in 2009. The U.S. Census reports that Jackson County has experienced losses in population at a greater rate than is typical of the State's rural areas. A racial makeup of residents includes 89 percent white, 7 percent Native American, and 2 percent Hispanic. However, informal surveys indicate a higher percent of Hispanics, most working as farm laborers. Recent statistics indicate a significant increase in poverty, especially related to food insecurity in Jackson County. The poverty rate of families in Jackson County increased from 9.6 percent in 2000 to 12.6 percent in 2008 (Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program WNEP).

This information, along with results of the formal Agricultural Survey I conducted, was used to establish the following educational programming priorities: 1) Farm Risk Management, 2) Soils and Nutrient Management, and 3) Sustainable Food Systems.

**Farm Risk Management**

The majority of respondents to the 2008 Jackson County Agricultural Survey chose farm risk management as their first priority for UW-Extension educational programming (Exhibit 1). This included topics on farm financial record keeping and analysis, price risk management, farm business arrangements, and planning for farm succession. Volatility in agriculture markets, and increasing input costs, has resulted in a need to closely manage the profit margin and therefore, the need for farm business and financial management tools and resources.

**Farm Succession:**
A generation ago, transferring the family farm was a fairly simple process. Tighter profit margins, greater market volatility, high land values, larger farm sizes, and higher costs of living increase uncertainty as to whether the family farm can be passed down from today's owners to the next generation. The average farmer age in Jackson County is 57; indicating many will retire in the next 15-20 years, and a need for farm succession programming.

I collaborated with the Agriculture Agents of the Western District and UW Specialists, to develop a workshop series for families titled "Transferring the Farm in a High Stakes Era" held in three western Wisconsin locations. A total of 132 families participated in the initial workshop which was designed to explore farm succession issues and considerations for beginning and retiring farm family members. The initial workshops were followed by small-group meetings to address specific needs as identified by workshop participants. I helped identify and select the workshop topics and speakers, wrote press releases, conducted interviews on public radio, and facilitated one of three workshops held in western Wisconsin. In a six-month follow-up survey I developed, and sent to all 132 families (N=43), 21 families indicated making progress on their farm business succession plans and 24 families

indicated making progress on their will and/or estate plan. One farmer stated "The knowledge that we gained from these programs gave us the confidence to put things in motion. Our sons started an LLC and purchased our cows. Future stages of the plan will be to sell them the machinery and then the land as they gain equity" (Exhibit 2).

The "Transferring the Farm in a High Stakes Era" workshop series has been replicated in three UW Extension districts. I developed a presentation which summarized our first year of the program and co-presented with my colleague Maria Bendixen, Clark County Dairy and Livestock Agent at the 2010 National Farm Business Management Conference in Fargo, ND (Exhibit 3). In 2010, I was one of the Western District Agriculture Agents and UW Specialists recognized for developing and conducting this workshop series with the "Team/Workgroup Leadership and Responsiveness Award" by UW-Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Program Area.

In Jackson County, 66 families attended our initial seminar and 24 families attended the small-group follow-up meeting, which addressed questions about farm business arrangements and tax issues in detail. I then worked individually with seven Jackson County families on their farm succession plans to help them identify their needs, utilizing UW-Extension resources to help them overcome obstacles to the transfer process. This included providing information about Wills and Trust, facilitating discussions about choosing a lawyer, and consulting with Dr. Phil Harris, UW-Extension Farm Law Specialist on farm business arrangements.

The Transferring the Farm workshops, and individual follow-up with families, made it clear to me that communication among family members is a major challenge to success for many farm transfers. A lack of family communication regarding a vision for the business, and a fear of a future without day-to-day farm work are common for the retiring generation. In 2012, I partnered with Joy Kirkpatrick; Outreach Specialist at the UW Center for Dairy Profitability to address issues specifically for the retiring generation entitled "Shifting Gears in Later Farming Years". I adapted a presentation from Roger Williams, Farm Mediator at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, which focused on defining and communicating goals and needs with family members. The presentation emphasized the importance of communication and addressed common reasons why communication can be difficult during farm succession, such as the overlapping boundaries of family and farm business (Exhibit 4).

In a post-workshop evaluation, families commented that they appreciated "putting pencil to the paper" to calculate actual dollar amounts for social security and their living needs, and "the discussion on retirement and financial needs was particularly useful and is not something typically available" (Exhibit 5).

Since this program, I have worked with four farms to help family members define and communicate their visions for the future. One example of this work is Farm A. They are experiencing typical growth in size and scale found on many Wisconsin farms. Twenty years ago Farm A raised Holstein steers, averaging 150 head on feed, farmed 600 acres, and was managed by two brothers and two young sons. The farm has grown to 900 head on feed, 4,000 acres, and an additional seven full-time, non-family employees. To help them define the role of the retiring generation and the roles of the two heirs and other employees, I facilitated discussions with Farm A and provided UW-Extension resources on job descriptions and developing a vision for the farm. The family members have written their goals and visions for the future, and shared them with each other. They plan to shape their visions for the future of the farm and develop an employee handbook this winter with my assistance.

A Farm Transfer impact survey of Jackson County families (N=16) (14 owners and 2 succeeding) who participated in these programs since 2010 found they have made significant strides and/or completed their farm succession plans. Thirteen of fourteen farm owner respondents indicated they have started their farm transfer process. Four farm owners have completed their transfer plans as a result of the programs; five more are 50-75 percent completed. A family indicated they "set up an irrevocable trust …" to avoid expensive legal fees at time of transfer, and another said, "We have gotten Nursing Home Insurance to protect the farm and kids", and other families updated their wills. Another family stated: "We talked to both kids and gave them a list of people they could trust when it came to decisions pertaining to the operations of the farm, and any problems executing our wills or concerning decisions

regarding our health and or care", and another family said they, "Transferred 95 acres to my son, sold a lot of the equipment to him, and am slowly transferring more land to him" (Exhibit 6).

I consider this program area to have potential to reach more farmers in the future. Each event has resulted in new families attending and considering the future of their farm. This fall I will attend the International Farm Transition Network Certificated Farm Succession Coordinator Training, which will improve my confidence and skills when working with families on their farm succession plans. While the initial group meetings are important, the individual meetings with families are essential for many to make progress. I find working with families has been an enjoyable aspect of this programming.

**Farm Financial Management:**
Increased volatility in agricultural markets and tighter profit margins realized in recent years has prompted stricter standards by lending institutions for farm businesses seeking financial credit. Farmers are required to provide more detailed business documentation for operating loans. The Jackson County Farm Service Agency (FSA) requested my help to improve farmers' bookkeeping and financial decision making skills.

To address this need, I collaborated with the FSA and Joy Kirkpatrick to develop a Heart of the Farm program for women specifically aimed at basic farm record keeping called "Bookkeepers' Bootcamp". I adapted and presented material on the importance of analyzing records and their value for making management decisions (Exhibit 7). In the workshop evaluation, participants indicated they increased their confidence and knowledge of bookkeeping resources, importance of keeping records, and what constitutes acceptable records (N=32).

Several participants requested a follow-up meeting that focused on specific record keeping software (Exhibit 8). To meet this request, I collaborated with Jenny Vanderlin, Assistant Director at the UW Center for Dairy Profitability, to develop a Farm Financial Recordkeeping workshop, introducing two popular farm accounting software programs, QuickBooks and Agriculture Accounting and Information Management System (AAIMS). Participants developed a set of farm financial records while learning basic bookkeeping skills and how to tailor the software program for their farm recordkeeping needs. Follow-up discussions with six participants indicated that, four improved their use of the AAIMS program, one made the decision not to invest in the QuickBooks program and are considering AAIMS, and one purchased the AAIMS program.

Building on the recordkeeping workshops, I collaborated with Jenny Vanderlin and Dr. Nate Splett, UW-River Falls Professor of Agricultural Economics, to develop a hands-on program designed for small groups titled "Using Farm Financial Statements for Better Business Decision Making". An initial meeting introduced basic financial ratios and how to create farm financial statements (including balance sheets and income statements). Results from a participant evaluation after the first meeting found that 80 percent of participants said their knowledge of the topics improved from "poor" or "average" to "good" or "excellent". All participants said they would use what they learned in the workshop on their farm N= 11 (Exhibit 9).

Participants were given two take-home assignments. The first instructed them to apply the class concepts to an example farm, and answer questions about the farm's financial position and performance based on the financial statements provided. The second assignment instructed them to create their own farm's financial statements and answer similar questions. I consulted with participants while they were working on their assignments to help with their questions or challenges. A unique aspect of the program was the use of webinar meetings as a format for Jenny, Nate, and I to meet with the participants each week following the initial meeting. During the webinar meetings, answers to the assignments were discussed and participant's questions were clarified. A final in-person meeting was held with the entire group to re-evaluate their understanding of financial statements and how they are applied to business decision making.

Participant's feedback on the meeting format included appreciation of "breaking down the information into smaller chunks to digest, and creating some visual examples". They also stated an "improvement in understanding dairy farm financial basics" and "using farm statements for profitability analysis, and the steps on how to start

making better financial decisions". A final participant evaluation of the program indicated five respondents had created financial statements and calculated financial ratios for their farm N=6 (Exhibit 10).

I presented an overview of "The Using Farm Financial Statements for Better Business Decision Making" program at the National Risk Management Education Conference in St. Louis, MO in April 2011 (Exhibit 11). This presentation was requested by Extension peers at the conference from Michigan and South Africa. This programming area will continue to be valuable, especially to beginning farmers, who often rely on annual operating loans. The hands-on assignments proved particularly useful for identifying challenges farmers have with creating and using financial information. The webinar format allowed the group to reconvene frequently to discuss questions and challenges without having to travel to meet in-person. It required clientele be familiar with computers and allowed them to work from home. The webinar format could be useful for other Farm Management programs; however the initial face-to-face meeting is essential. The face-to-face meeting allows participants to meet the UW Specialists, develop confidence in the program objectives, and be accountable for the program assignments.

**Dairy and Grain Risk Management:**
I partnered with Western District Agriculture Agents and UW Specialists to address the increasing volatility in agriculture markets. I co-organized workshops and presented information which focused on UW-Extension tools and resources available to grain and dairy farmers to help them evaluate their profit margin.

To address this need, I hosted the UW Extension "Deal or No Deal" seminar series in Jackson County and demonstrated cost of production spreadsheets developed by UW Extension. An evaluation of seminar participants indicated that 90 percent said they have a better understanding of price volatility and 89 percent said they will use the tools provided to calculate their cost of production for their farm N= 13(Exhibit 12). A local Co-op Credit Union lender attended this workshop and used the spreadsheets with farmers. His supervisor later thanked me for these programming efforts and has since asked for additional copies of the CD of the spreadsheets for the lender to use with their clientele.

As a follow-up to the meeting, I helped farmers, consultants, and lenders use the spreadsheets with their farm numbers in one-on-one follow-up consultations. An agronomist at a local cooperative, who I taught to use the spreadsheets, used them to calculate farms' cost of production for thirty clients since September 2011. Based on the continued interest of these resources, I presented these spreadsheets to the Jackson County grain marketing group, which I co-organized with a group of farmers in the county. In an initial meeting, I worked with the farmers in the group to use their farm numbers to calculate cost of production.

Since this meeting, the group has further identified other specific risk management topics they would like to address including crop insurance with a marketing strategy, simulated grain marketing, and land rental rates. To help address these risk management topics I partnered with Extension specialists, the Jackson County FSA, and industry representatives to cover topics including crop insurance updates, marketing terminology, and marketing strategies. I facilitated a group discussion on land rental rates with UW Agriculture Economics Professor Bruce Jones, and I co-taught a simulated grain marketing game with Shawano County UW-Extension Agriculture Agent Katie Behnke. Farmers indicated learning concepts they could use immediately and said they had a better understanding of the topics covered N=10 (Exhibit 13).

Issues specific to dairy risk management have also been a part of my programming. In 2009 with UW-Extension Dairy Reproduction Specialist Paul Fricke, I presented spreadsheets designed to help dairy farmers decide when it is economically advantageous to invest in gender-biased semen. On average, participants increased their knowledge of the UW Extension tools to evaluate the economics of sexed semen N=24(Exhibit 14).

In 2012, thirty-four farm owners and employees attended a meeting on "Dairy Reproduction Money" which is a team based approach to identifying ways to improve cow reproduction. At the conclusion of this meeting, I was approached by Farm B, to facilitate team meetings with UW Extension Reproduction specialists Dr. Paul Fricke and Connie Cordoba, and the farm veterinarian and nutritionists. These team meetings have resulted in identifying

ways to improve Farm B's cow reproduction and have increased profitability by an estimated $230.00/cow/year for their 100 cow farm.

Farm B has promoted "Dairy Reproduction Money" program to other farms in the county and hosted a reproduction training, which I organized for dairy farmers and employees. Together with Farm B, we identified specific issues to be addressed in the workshop including proper reproduction protocols and common mistakes. I invited UW Extension St. Croix County Agriculture Agent Ryan Sterry to present UW research that addressed these issues. Twenty-two farmers and farm employees representing eight farms and two veterinarians attended this workshop. I provided the training in Spanish for the non-English speaking attendees. At this workshop, I met a number of farms that are now interested in the Reproduction Money program. I am currently meeting with one farm that is starting this process and I intend to enroll additional farms in the program this winter.

**Farm Safety:**
Since 2010, I co-taught the Western District skid steer safety training for farm owners and employees. I translated and presented the training course for Hispanic employees in five locations (Jackson, Buffalo, Chippewa, St. Croix and Trempealeau Counties) (Exhibit 15). In 2012, I facilitated the program in Black River Falls with the help of Agriculture Agents in the Western District. At this training, an Employment Specialist from the L.E. Phillips Career Development Center attended with a client who needed training for employment. In total I have trained 60 Spanish speaking farm employees and 62 in English, and helped train other UW Extension agents to conduct this program. I was able to reach a greater audience by writing an article on skid steer safety for the "Dairy Partner" an English/Spanish newsletter, for dairy farm owners and employees (Exhibit 16). This quarterly publication is available on-line and is mailed to 1200 farms.

I co-authored a script and translated into Spanish a skid steer safety DVD which covers the topics of the course. This DVD was a National Finalist for a 2012 NACAA Communications Award in the Video Presentation category (Exhibit 17). Feedback from seven County Agriculture Agents indicates the DVD is currently being used by farmers, and is being incorporated in Wisconsin Safe Operation of Tractor & Machinery Certification courses. As a further result of this program, I am planning to conduct similar safety programs for adults as a request from the L.E. Phillips Career Development Center.

**Soils and Nutrient Management**

Jackson County soils are diverse with a third of the crop acres considered to be "prime farmland". Major concerns for farmland include water erosion in areas with steeper slopes, and wind erosion on sandy and sandy loam soils of the county (Soil Survey of Jackson County 2000). In the Jackson County Agricultural Survey farmers across all enterprises, indicated a strong interest in nutrient management education (Exhibit 1).

I conducted the Nutrient Management Farmer Education Program (NMFE) each year in Jackson County from 2009-2012. Fifty-six farmers, area agronomists, and other technical service providers have participated in the program which is intended to combine classroom instruction and individual consultation to help farmers manage nutrients for both economic and environmental benefit. I worked with sixteen of these farmers to apply classroom concepts to on-farm demonstrations and/or research for hands-on learning on their farms. These on-farm projects include using UW recommendations for crop nutrients based on soil test results, calibrating manure spreaders, calculating manure production, and crediting on-farm nutrient sources when purchasing commercial fertilizer (Exhibit 18). Farmers commented on their management changes and the impacts these changes have had on their operations and how this program style was meaningful for them (Exhibit 19). The estimated total cropland managed by the sixteen survey respondents is approximately 18,000 acres.

A specific example of this is Farm C which participated in the program with an on-farm evaluation of their nitrogen management. They suspected they may have been over applying nitrogen. After participating in the NMFE program they calculated the amount of manure they spread and took pre-plant nitrate samples in the spring. As a result, they lowered their commercial nitrogen application from 80 to 40 pounds per acre. According to Farm C's

calculations, a 40 pound per acre reduction at a cost of $0.48 per pound of nitrogen equaled $19.20/acre x 195 acres = $3,744 savings on that field alone. Farm C has now adopted UW fertilizer recommendations on the other 1500 acres of corn they grow.

An aspect farmers particularly liked about the NMFE program is a round table meeting style where current issues and concerns for the upcoming growing season can be discussed. I organized and co-lead the round table discussions with staff from UW-Discovery Farms. This meeting style helped identify the needs and interests of the farmers. The increase in grain prices beginning in 2010 resulted in a strong sales effort for products with assertions that have little or no credible research to support their claim. A popular discussion topic in the NMFE Program was the efficacy of micronutrient packages being marketed. This provided an opportunity to discuss the role of micronutrients in grain production and help farmers evaluate the financial efficiency of some of the packages being marketed. An example of this is Farm D.

Farm D, a three-family partnership managing over 3,000 acres of corn and soybeans, participated in the NMFE program and cooperated on a replicated research trial to evaluate the efficacy of a micro nutrient package. I designed the trial with the help of UW Soil Scientists Dr. John Peters, Dr. Carrie Laboski, and Dr. Matt Ruark. Twenty Jackson County farmers and local agronomists attended a field day at the test plot in 2011 where farmers learned the value of replicated side-by-side research trials, soil and tissue analysis, and the correct approach to determine the need for micro nutrient application. They also learned about the function of root growth regulator hormones and where they might be used appropriately. Based on results of the research plot (Exhibit 20), Farm D made the decision to not invest in the micronutrient product, saving $16.00 per acre. If roughly half of their acres are planted into corn, this decision results in a $24,000 savings each year.

In addition to on-farm research, part of the NMFE program is sharing the information with other farmers in the region. Two farms were willing to host demonstration field days which highlighted class concepts. In 2010, I collaborated with former UW Soil Scientist Dr. Dick Wolkowski and the Natural Resources Conservation Service on a soil quality field day held at a participating farm. The focus of the field day was maintaining and enhancing soil quality for the long-term profitability and sustainability of the farm and environment. I co-taught demonstrations of the soil quality concepts of water infiltration, rooting patterns, soil structure development, aggregate stability, earthworm activity, and soil respiration. Fifteen (N=29) farmers and other agricultural professionals who attended indicated they learned more about managing for better soil quality through these efforts and several farmers have expressed interest in hosting a field day next year (Exhibit 21).

Farmers often want to see the reality of recommendations on their farm in order to accept them. They also gain more confidence in the UW recommendations by seeing them demonstrated on their farms and by knowing that information generated on their farm is valued by UW Extension and contributes to state-wide recommendations.

The on-farm research in Jackson County also included the validation of the University of Wisconsin's Maximum return to Nitrogen (MRTN) rate guidelines led by UW Soil Scientist Dr. Carrie Laboski. The purpose of this research project was to evaluate and validate MRTN nitrogen rate guidelines over a range of Wisconsin soils and cropping systems. I collaborated with three Jackson County farmers to conduct MRTN trials on corn (two farms, 2009 and 2010) and wheat (one farm, 2009). The research was useful to participating farmers who gained understanding and confidence in the MRTN guidelines and have adopted the University's recommendations. Results of the research added to the statewide dataset.

An example of the results from the on-farm MRTN trials I have conducted is Farm E, a grain and dairy farm with over 4,000 acres of corn and soybeans. Farm E participated in the MRTN program following a conversation stating he was not confident in the UW recommendations for nitrogen on corn. Based on soil yield potential, the UW recommendation was 40 pounds of nitrogen less than what he had traditionally applied. By participating in the MRTN demonstration on his farm, he saw first-hand the diminishing return to nitrogen applications above the UW

recommended rate. He also learned how to use UW's MRTN price ratio table, and gained a better understanding his soil's yield potential.

Since 2011, I served as the co-leader of the Agriculture and Natural Resources program Nutrient Management



p since 2009. As part of this position, I have organized others to write articles and have written articles for the Agri-View newspaper's (annual circulation: 35,000 farms) nutrient management special section (Exhibit 22). The NMFE program is one I plan to continue to offer. Farmers utilize the program as an opportunity to discuss current nutrient management issues. I anticipate the program will continue to be popular as manure is becoming more valued as a fertilizer, and as the impact of the 2012 drought is felt by farms in Jackson County.

**Sustainable Food Systems**

Statistics indicate food insecurity is a serious concern in Jackson County. Jackson County food pantry recipients increased from 100 visitors per month in 2007 to over 700 in 2009. Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program recipients increased from 525 to 573 during the summer of 2009. In addition, the number of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch has increased, with one school district having over half of students eligible for the program in 2009 (Jackson County WNEP). Availability of vegetables and fruit to people of limited income is one of the many facets of the growing food security problem in Jackson County.

Community leaders involved in Jackson County food security projects contacted the UW-Extension office to address these issues. Luane Meyer, UW Extension Family Living Agent and Monica Lobenstein, UW Extension 4-H/Youth Development Agent, and I developed an Extension multi-disciplinary approach titled "A Homegrown Response to Food Security in Jackson County" to address growing concerns (Exhibit 23). We were awarded the "Council for Strategic Change, Exploring our Purpose, Vision, & Values Professional Development Funds Team Award" for this cross-programming effort. My programming specifically addressed helping create opportunities for families to grow their own fresh produce, improve the quality and quantity of fresh produce grown by small-scale produce farms of Jackson County, and connect existing produce farms to Jackson County residents.

**Spaulding Road Community Garden:**
In 2009, I began working with community members to educate the public about community gardens through newspaper articles and presentations at community events. I identified key stakeholders to form a community garden committee, which worked with city officials to secure property for the Spaulding Road Community Garden (SRCG). The SRCG is located near low-income housing, a city park, and schools with a portion of the land being used by the high school as a "Land Lab" for students to learn to grow produce. The SRCG began with 28 plots rented in 2009, increasing each year, to 45 plots rented in 2012. I facilitate and lead monthly SRCG activities and educational workshops. I taught basic gardening skills to the Boys and Girls Club youth at their SRCG garden plot and lead workshops for adult audiences on vegetable production topics, cooking with garden produce, and creating rain barrels for water conservation. Monica Lobenstein and I taught community members and students from the Black River Area Green School how to make rain barrels which are sold to generate funds for the SRGC. To date, over 150 rain barrels have been made and sold which support SRCG activities (Exhibit 24).

An end of season evaluation indicated gardeners at SRCG increased their knowledge about gardening from their plot neighbors and garden workshops (N=13). Gardeners also reported their average annual savings from growing their own produce at the SRCG to be $110 (Exhibit 25). Through the Jackson County Master Gardener program, members of the Ho-Chunk Nation participated in workshops at the SRCG. In turn, I taught gardening workshops at the Ho-Chunk Nation. This sharing of experiences has brought new ideas to both the SRCG and the Ho-Chunk Nation Community Gardens.

**Fruit production education:**
Jackson County has a history of commercial small-fruit production with soil and climate characteristics suitable for blueberries and strawberries. I collaborated with Agriculture Agents in the Western District to offer commercial

small-fruit production workshops since 2010. Attendance at these workshops has continued to grow each year. I helped organize speakers for county and regional fruit production workshops and grower panels. Some attendees used the information from the workshops to evaluate ideas for expansion of their production to meet a full-time

 r improve the production of blueberries with UW Extension resources.

A retired dairy farmer, Farm E, planted two acres of blueberries (2000 plants), is now marketing to local Amish and commercial grocery stores. I worked with Farm E on pest management issues and utilized the UW Plant Disease Diagnostic Lab to identify production problems. Farm E hosted one of the western region summer fruit field days. Farm F planted 150 blueberry plants after attending the western Wisconsin winter fruit seminar. I helped this farmer learn proper techniques for pruning his blueberries. I helped Farm G with the blueberry variety selection for his 200 plants and connected him with other blueberry growers in the area.

In order to further connect these and other local produce farms with Jackson County residents, I worked with Jackson County Master Gardener volunteers to create the Jackson County Produce Map (Exhibit 27). This map promotes roadside stands, U-pick farms, Farmer's Markets, and Community Supported Agriculture farms in Jackson County. Eight area businesses sponsored the map in 2011 and thirteen sponsored the map in 2012, allowing 1,500 color copies to be distributed throughout the county at local businesses and public offices. I wrote ten vignettes for farms on the produce map which were published weekly in a local newspaper (Exhibit 28).

I collaborated with Luane Meyer, UW-Extension Family Living Agent to create the Jackson County Produce Exchange (JCPE). The JCPE is an outlet for fruit and vegetable producers' excess produce, connecting it to local food pantries and WIC recipients. The JCPE provides an easy to use chart of the locations accepting produce throughout the week. This has resulted in four new outlets for fresh produce, to be provided to Jackson County residents in need. Participating farmers value the opportunity to provide their unsold produce to needy community members.

**Other significant programs**

An additional need that was identified from working in my three primary program areas was improving communication with employees both family and non-family. To address this need I developed and presented the following materials and shared them with colleagues.

I developed a presentation on the topic of farm employee handbooks and defining farm roles for the 2010 Dairy Herd Health Clinics, presented in Black River Falls and Bangor (presented by peers). I developed a similar presentation on the topic of positive farm labor management practices which I presented at two "Heart of the Farm" programs (Oshkosh 2010 and Siren 2011), the Wisconsin Ag Women's Summit at the Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells in 2011, and the annual UW Extension Cow College held in Clintonville, WI in 2012 (Exhibit 29).

I was asked by The Farm & Industry Short Course program to develop the curriculum and co-instruct the Spanish for the Agricultural Sciences course for the fall semester of 2011 and 2012. Students in this course gain knowledge in Spanish vocabulary, basic communication skills, and resources available for the agricultural employer working with Hispanic employees. Students develop skills in workplace culture and Hispanic customs in order to effectively manage farm employees (Exhibit 30).

I am currently a leader of the Farm and Risk Management (FARM team), Human Resources Management subgroup, which is working on a state-wide survey of employee retention and recruitment. Also as part of the FARM Team, I have participated as an assessor for the Management Assessment Center program since 2011. I look forward to working in this program in particular, as I see farm size continue to grow in the county and a resulting need for farmers to improve their management skills. This is a niche Extension is well suited for, which other service providers are often not able to address.

As an Extension Agriculture Agent, I feel privileged to become a member of the community, and to have the opportunity to work with so many different people in Jackson County. The particularly rewarding aspects of my Extension programming are a reflection of the diversity in agriculture and educational needs of the County. The variety of program topics of interest to Jackson County farmers has challenged me to learn, and expand my knowledge in many areas. This, along with the opportunity to help people make decisions that improve their livelihood, is perhaps the most fulfilling, and unique aspect of being an Extension Agent in Jackson County.