NEW “TOOLS” AVAILABLE TO STRENGTHEN WOMEN, LAND & LEGACY TEAMS AND COMMUNITIES

By Carol Richardson Smith and Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen

The participation of local women, as part of a Women, Land & Legacy (WLL) local team, in planning and carrying out WLL listening and learning sessions is a hallmark and one of the most exciting aspects of the work of WLL. Local teams are a real source of empowerment for the women who participate in them—and they work very effectively to empower other rural women in more than one quarter of Iowa’s counties.

Local teams that have been active for several years in WLL may have held successful learning sessions for almost all of the topics on their original listening session list. Does this sound familiar for your local team? And possibly your local team is experiencing some natural turnover of team members! By listening to local teams, the WLL state team has learned that local team women are interested in other ideas for programs, considering new audiences, ways to renew team members, find new members, and work well as a team.

The WLL state team developed tools to assist local teams achieve their local goals for WLL. Since each local team and local situation is different, a “program” did not seem appropriate! So, instead, the focus is on 2 sets of activities or “tools” that each local team can customize to their own situation.

- “Toolbox: Focus on the Local Team” are tools to strengthen local teams with clear images of the way they want to work and assistance in finding the members they need to work together for sustainability. In this set, teams will find tools:
  o to focus on the WLL vision and their own vision as a team,
  o to think about how they want to be connected and to communicate as a team,
  o and team building tools to assist them with finding the talents that they need for a strong team and work out their team roles

- “Toolbox: Focus on the Community” are tools to strengthen community opportunities for WLL local teams by connecting the work of the team with well-being and livelihood in their community.

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In this “community” set, teams will find:
- Ways to explore and understand how they see “community”,
- ways to understand how families are supported in their community,
- ways to expand the local participation and benefit experienced through WLL,
- and an exciting tool to find and connect opportunities for families in their community and consider how WLL could strengthen them.

Descriptions and directions for both “Toolboxes” are now included in the WLL Development Guide and assistance in using them is available from WLL Coordinator Wren Almitra at wren@wfan.org. ASK ABOUT THEM SOON!

Applications Still Being Accepted for Harvesting Our Potential, a Women, Food and Ag. Network Mentoring Program!

Harvesting Our Potential helps train women to become farmers by giving them the opportunity to work on farms with women who are already successful farmers.

Mentees work directly with a farmer instructor to gain hands-on experience. Most mentorships will last around 10 weeks and take place any time within the growing season, whenever it works best for mentor and mentee. We have the ability to support 10 pair of farmers. The application deadline has been extended to February 19, 2016.

Those interested in being a part of the 2016 program as either a mentor or a mentee can learn more and apply here. You may also contact the program coordinator Lynn Heuss by email or at 515-201-9405.

Promoting Your 2016 Women, Land & Legacy Events
By Wren Almitra

It’s a new year, which, in Women, Land & Legacy world, means multiple opportunities for Iowa women to benefit from Learning Sessions throughout the state. (In 2015 over 20 events were held by locally led teams supporting women from over 15 counties—wow!)

Those opportunities remain just opportunities, however, until you effectively promote your events and get those women to the table (or field, or vineyard, or potluck, the list goes on!). So, how do we effectively promote our events? As with anything WLL related, it’s going to depend on your county. However, I have a few tips below that can be used state wide.

Invite Your Coordinator to a Planning Meeting! As coordinator for a statewide program, much of my correspondence with teams is through phone and e-mail. However, I am someone who really loves to put names to faces and, if possible, offer WLL support in person. Please let me know of any planning meetings and of course Learning Sessions you are holding and I will do my best to attend!

WLL Coordinator Wren Almitra (left) speaks with Tama Co. WLL team at their planning meeting for 2016 Learning Sessions.
Learn more about the National Agricultural Statistic Service (NASS)
By Kay Triplett

Have you heard of NASS? ...Oh yeah, the government agency that does surveys. Do you feel like running when they call? Well, think again. Does your family run when you ask what they want for dinner, or if they are warm enough, or if they need a bigger allowance? Of course they don’t. You need to collect information before you can make decisions on how best to help them. That’s what NASS does, too.

The National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) is one of the major contributors to USDA/REE’s basic information pool. By taking a few minutes to respond to a survey, you help provide the information needed throughout the agricultural community to make informed decisions, administer farm and other government programs, and educate consumers. In other words, the USDA programs that make your life safer, more secure, and more comfortable depend on data from NASS to be effective and run efficiently. It all starts with USDA’s Research, Education and Economics’ (REE) data collection.

NASS surveys are important to all sectors of agriculture because the data comes directly from the producer. They can be reported in three ways: over a secure internet instrument, by phone or by personal interviews. NASDA field representative are currently collecting data, or will be in the near future, for the following surveys: NASS field representatives are scheduled to complete data for the following:

CEAP: In cooperation with NRCS, NASDA field staff are currently contacting operators of specific land parcels for the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP).

Bee and Honey: Annually, changes in honey bee populations and honey production are measured with the Bee and Honey survey conducted in January and February. This year producers with fewer than 5 colonies will also be surveyed. NASS is also collecting data from crop producers about the cost and availability of bees for pollination.

Certified Organic Survey: This is the second consecutive year for this survey that measures the number of certified organic acres, transitioning acres, production and income for organic commodities. Organic farming is increasingly prevalent and there is definitely a need for more data in this area.

ARMS III: The annual Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS III) is collected in February and March. It is the most important and comprehensive survey used by governing bodies at all levels to give a clear picture of the health of the farming sector, both at the business and the family level. It is a detailed financial survey, but crucial to legislation, payments, and programs. Please cooperate with the trained field staff who can make completion easier and quicker.

Hog and Agricultural Production: These quarterly surveys run for the first two weeks of March, June, September, and December. Data collection will be from February 29 to March 15. The March Agricultural Production report measures the intentions of what crops will be planted for the 2016 growing year.

Milk Production and Cattle on Feed: Other surveys important to the dairy and cattle industry are quarterly Milk Production and monthly Cattle on Feed; they measure changes in production at regular intervals. When you cooperate on these surveys you are helping your industry plan for your benefit.

Cash Rent: County-level cash rent data is used by a variety of USDA agencies to help develop and administer Federal farm programs. Data collection will run from February through July, 2016 and results will be published on September 9, 2016.

Did you know NASS relies on field staff who work on a part-time basis to count field crops and contact producers? If you know someone who might enjoy visiting with producers and collecting data for NASS in Iowa, call 515-284-4340 or 1-800-772-0825. We will direct you to the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) field supervisor in your area who hires their field staff.

Learn more at http://www.nass.usda.gov/.
First, make a list: as I talk with prospective new teams throughout the state one of my first recommendations is to make a list of any potential partners and news outlet sources in your county and surrounding counties. This list is crucial for so many aspects of your team’s work—identifying partners can help you find donations, grant funding, and venues for events. It is also incredibly helpful for getting the word about your outreach efforts to as many women in your county as you can. By creating or reinforcing local networks you are building a stronger Women, Land & Legacy community. Your participants may even be more inclined to attend your event if trusted agency or organization they are a part of is helping to promote it.

Your lists should include the following:

- Newspapers, journals, radio stations who would be open to writing a story or giving you some air-time;
- Non-profits, agencies, or ag. groups in your area that have similar interests aligned with Women, Land & Legacy and who are willing to help promote your event for free. Often all that is asked in return, if anything, is that you recognize them at the event;
- Locations to post flyers or other blurbs about your events such as church bulletins, community centers, libraries, grocery stores, banks, etc.

Second, create and distribute your advertising materials: these materials could include press releases, flyers, e-mails, social media postings, and mailings, such as post cards or letters.

- Your print materials should be accessible: easy to read (less text is usually a good thing here) and aesthetically pleasing to the eye.
- Post flyers in visible locations.
- Don’t be afraid to send a press release more than once! Definitely get out notices in advance and re-send again as the date gets closer.
- Word of mouth is one of the best methods for sharing information; encourage your contacts to help spread the news!
- If your event is at a venue somewhat off the beaten path, consider investing in some road signs to help direct people and get attention.

Third, get feedback: how do you know which promotional avenues have been the most effective?

- Ask your participants at the time of registration, whether it is on-line or in person, how they heard about your event. This information can really help you focus your outreach efforts in the future.

A few last thoughts!

- This is not of course a comprehensive list. As with almost anything Women, Land & Legacy related, each county will have different opportunities and connections. If you have more ideas for effective publicizing, please let us know so we can pass it on to other teams!
- Have realistic expectations for attendance. If the total population in your county is relatively low compared to others in the state, it is okay to assume that you may have fewer attendees than counties with a higher population. Also remember that not all events will attract the same audience every time—some will be more appealing or relevant than others.
- Most importantly, enjoy the outcomes of all of the good work you’ve put in to create a successful learning and networking opportunity for women in your county!
Updates and News from Around the State

Women, Land & Legacy is on Facebook

Have you checked out and "liked" any of the four Women, Land and Legacy Facebook pages yet? If not, we highly recommend it! Tama County is the latest team to create one, realizing that this is yet another tool to network with women in their county AND keep in touch with what is going on statewide. Below are the links to Tama, Iowa, and Johnson County pages, as well as the state WLL page.

If you are interested in getting a Facebook presence for your county and need help getting it set up, please let us know. Teams have found these to be great outreach tools and a good way to receive more visibility for local WLL events. And it’s easy to do!

Tama Co. https://www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacytamacounty/

Iowa Co. https://www.facebook.com/IowaCountyWomenLandandLegacy/

Johnson Co. https://www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacyjohnson/

State https://www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacy/

Johnson County Hosts First Annual WLL Farm Crawl

Johnson Co. Women, Land & Legacy held our first annual Farm Crawl on September 27th. Over 80 participants visited three farms and a nearby farm stand where women are at the helm. One of the most consistent messages we heard from farm crawlers was that we need more of these types of events! We agree and are looking forward to our next crawl in fall of 2016. Stay tuned for details through our Facebook page, https://www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacyjohnson.

Left photo: Lindsey Boerjan (right), a fifth generation farmer speaking to another area farmer amid her raised beds.

Right photo: Lori Hahn (right) shows two of over 15 horses she has rescued.
Look for us at the Iowa Water Conference! Women, Land & Legacy and Women, Food & Ag. Network will be at the 2016 annual Iowa Water Conference in Ames. Look for our booth in the exhibitor section in the Scheman building. More information about the conference including workshop topics can be found at: http://www.aep.iastate.edu/iwc/. This is a great opportunity to learn more about current issues and topics on soil and water conservation throughout the state.

WLL State Team to Hold Webinar with Iowa Learning Farms, April 20th

Save the date! WLL state team members will be giving a webinar highlighting the success of the project statewide and how new counties can get involved. More details will be posted to our on-line calendar. Please help spread the word to your neighboring counties. https://womenlandandlegacy.wordpress.com/events-calendar-3/

Women, Land & Legacy Looks to Expand Outside of Iowa

The WLL State Team recently began looking at ways the Iowa-based project can expand beyond the state’s borders. We’re excited about the potential to make Women, Land & Legacy available to agricultural women in other states. If you are in another state or know women in other states that may be interested, please get in touch with us: stateteam@womenlandandlegacy.org.

Women Landowners in The Raccoon River Watershed Invited to Participate in Photo Project

We invite women farmland owners to participate in a community-based, participatory photo project highlighting their experiences within the Raccoon River watershed.

Should you choose to take part, you would meet with other women in your area to plan together a photo project that would highlight your stories about your watershed. Your participation is voluntary. There is no cost and no compensation associated with this project.

The photos and accompanying narratives would eventually be shared in a community reception at the conclusion of the project. The reception will be co-sponsored by the Raccoon River Watershed Association and the Women, Food and Agriculture Network.

Your participation is voluntary. There is no cost to participate in this project and no compensation. If you are interested in learning more, please email Angie Carter angiecarter@augustana.edu or call her at 309-794-7214 to learn more.

Women Caring for the Land Events

The Women, Food and Ag. Network’s Women Caring for the Land program has several upcoming events in Nebraska and Iowa. Please share the calendar link below with anyone you may know in Iowa or central Nebraska who could benefit from these engaging and informative events on soil health. Details on Nebraska events are posted at the link below, with Iowa events to be posted soon. http://www.wfan.org/wfan-calendar/
2016 Women, Land & Legacy Statewide Learning Sessions

Fremont, Mills, Montgomery Page Counties Host a Culinary Event: February 18th, Red Oak

On Thursday, February 18th, Women, Land & Legacy of Southwest Iowa will be hosting a learning experience for the taste buds! Participants will be inspired to grow fresh herbs and garden produce to incorporate into their own recipes after learning how Sauced, Red Oak’s newest restaurant, uses locally grown goods in their dishes. Sauced just celebrated its grand opening in mid-January. According to its website, “At Sauced, we take pride in our locally grown ingredients. We provide a family friendly environment with an emphasis on Italian cuisine.”

The schedule for the evening includes the option to dine at Sauced, located on the southeast corner of the square at 322 E. Coolbaugh, by purchasing your own meal off the menu at 6:00 p.m. Beginning at 7:00, Sally Stoakes, the owner of Sauced, will present information about using a farm-to-table philosophy in her business. She will also introduce participants to a variety of herbs and talk about how to grow and use them at home.

Pre-registration is encouraged by Monday, February 15th by calling Iowa State University Extension & Outreach-Mills County at 712-527-3316, Fremont County at 712-374-2351, or Montgomery County at 712-623-2592. Special accommodations may be requested. The cost is $5 per person, payable at the door. Proceeds will be used to offset the cost of the program. Menu items available at listed price.

Des Moines/Louisa Counties Host Map of My Kingdom: February 29th, Morning Sun

The Des Moines/Louisa Women, Land & Legacy team presents Mary Swander’s play Map of My Kingdom and a short workshop afterward, which will help you begin to tackle the critical issue of land transition. Monday, February 29th, 2016.

Doors open at 6:30 p.m., play begins at 7:00 p.m. at the Morning Sun Community, 106 Main St., Morning Sun, IA.

Who’s going to get the farm? And what are they going to do with it? Will your future plans for your land create harmony or strife for your family? Or have you even started to think that far ahead? Map of My Kingdom tackles the critical issue of land transition. The play will resonate with those who have been through or are working through challenging land transfer issues that include division of the land among siblings, to selling out to a neighbor, to attempts to preserve the land’s integrity against urban sprawl. The drama will inspire the hesitant and the fearful to start the conversation that cannot wait.

This event is free and open to the public. RSVP’s are encouraged to Jamie Grimes, 319-523-6411 ext. 3 in Louisa Co. or 319-753-6221 ext. 3 in Des Moines County OR e-mail Jamie at Jamie.grimes@ia.nacdnnet.net. Walk-ins welcome.
Iowa County Hosts Session on Grain Marketing: 
March 3rd, Williamsburg

The Iowa County Women, Land and Legacy team invites the community to a free presentation, “Lessons in Grain Marketing” on Thursday, March 3rd at the Williamsburg Recreation Center from 3 to 5 p.m. Registration will begin at 2:30 p.m. with appetizers and door prizes available between sessions.

Our expert speaker is Iowa County native, Terry Jones. In 1998, Terry started Russell Consulting Group with Moe Russell, which does risk management for individual family farm operations to help them market their products. Over the years, Terry has built a wide following as an agribusiness and commodity marketing consultant with hedge funds and producer clients throughout the U.S. He also serves on an advisory board for Co-Bank, a large lender to the agricultural sector.

Terry’s presentation will be broken into two sessions. The first session, beginning at 3 pm, will cover “Learning Marketing Basics.” This session will offer an introduction to basic terms for cash, future or option markets as well as basic marketing strategies. The second session will begin at 4 pm and discuss “Building and applying your marketing plan.” Getting more in depth, participants will focus on making a marketing plan for risk management and then applying it to the current corn and soybean markets.

To ensure adequate seating and handouts, please RSVP by calling the USDA office at 319-668-2010 or by emailing WLL member, Jennifer Ness at Jennifer.ness@ia.usda.gov.

Buena Vista/Pocahontas Counties Host Grain Marketing Event: 
March 22nd, Laurens

Women, Land, and Legacy Buena Vista and Pocahontas Counties presents a Learning Session on Grain Marketing. Join us on Tuesday, March 22, 2016 at 6:30pm registration beings at 6:00pm at West Iowa Bank, Laurens IA for “Marketing 101” For Beginners with Jamie O’Hearn, from Pocahontas Pro Coop. Jamie will be discussing commodity marketing.

Registration in advance are requested by calling Colleen Schwanz at Buena Vista County NRCS Office 712-732-3096 Ext 3 or email Colleen.Schwanz@ia.nacdnet.net.

SW Iowa Counties Present Women Gaining Ground: 
April 30th, Glenwood

Save the date! 2nd annual Women Gaining Ground event, April 30th at Glenwood High School, 504 East Sharp St., Glenwood, IA. Registration begins at 8:00 am and the program starts at 9:00 a.m. Cost is $25. A range of topics will be covered throughout the day. More details will be posted to the WLL calendar.