



Rural Legacy

A Quarterly Newsletter of Women, Land, & Legacy
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What is Women, Land, & Legacy?

Nearly half of Iowa farmland is owned by women. Reaching them with the education and tools women use to actively manage their land, act in their communities, and achieve their goals have been difficult for farm service providers and agency personnel. Women, Land, and Legacy is founded upon connecting women with resources and information.

Iowa's USDA State Outreach Council originally sponsored WLL. A collaboration of agencies and organizations later emerged to support a state team. This team developed a unique WLL strategy which combined listening and learning sessions involving small groups of women. The strategy included:

- **Forming local teams** to define and support a local space
- Making **listening to local women** the critical first step in the WLL process
- **Focusing on the importance of participation and social connections to learning** for women in locally planned learning sessions.

From the first listening sessions held in 2004-2005, the WLL network of local teams listened to nearly 2000 women in 37 counties. Many local teams held locally-planned learning sessions on topics identified in the initial listening meetings.

A report from the 900 women who participated in the first set of listening sessions was compiled and released in 2010. It is available at www.womenlandandlegacy.org/womanvoice.htm.

When the WLL local teams advanced to Level II learning sessions, the state team included evaluation in the process.

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WLL Receives Rural Business Enterprise Grant

In April 2012, the Women, Land, and Legacy (WLL) State Team applied for a Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) from USDA Rural Development through the Iowa Valley Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D). The application was recently officially approved for this two-year grant project.

The state WLL team identified a need for leadership development within local WLL teams. Additionally, local teams requested a method to network with other local teams across the state. As the state team researched how to meet these requests, they saw that women could apply their community leadership skills within their own rural businesses and farms.

The RBEG project will begin in three counties: Iowa, Tama (including the Meskwaki Nation) and potentially Poweshiek. The WLL state team is developing a training curriculum for these local WLL teams. This training includes leadership methods and processes that work well for women, for use within the local team structure and local communities.

In addition, the state team will assist the counties develop and conduct a listening session for women who own or co-own small agricultural and/or natural resource businesses.

During these sessions, women will share their dreams and visions for their businesses. They will also identify additional resources they need to create a successful business.

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INTERESTED IN FACEBOOK?

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WLLFacebookSurvey>

WLL is creating a Facebook page for *you*, the participants and users. We need your input on how to make it best!

Please let us know of your interest by completing the survey available at the link above.

Thank you!



Team Spotlight: Meet the State Team

Each quarter we will share a WLL team from somewhere in Iowa. For this newsletter, we are starting with our State Team.

Corry Bregendahl is an assistant scientist at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture where she conducts evaluation of food and agriculture projects.

Beth Grabau has worked for USDA's Farm Service Agency for 25 years and is the Public Relations and Outreach Specialist for Iowa.

Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen has been an employee of the USDA NRCS for 25 years currently serving as the Area Easement Specialist for southeast Iowa.

Carol Richardson Smith Experience that informs her current consulting work has included classroom teaching, Iowa State University County Extension, managing a rural community support program for a national non-profit, and involvement in an entrepreneurial rural business.

Kay Triplett has served as a Statistical Assistant for the past 22 years at USDA/National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Laura Crowell is the state public affairs officer for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Iowa. She's worked for NRCS for more than 15 years.

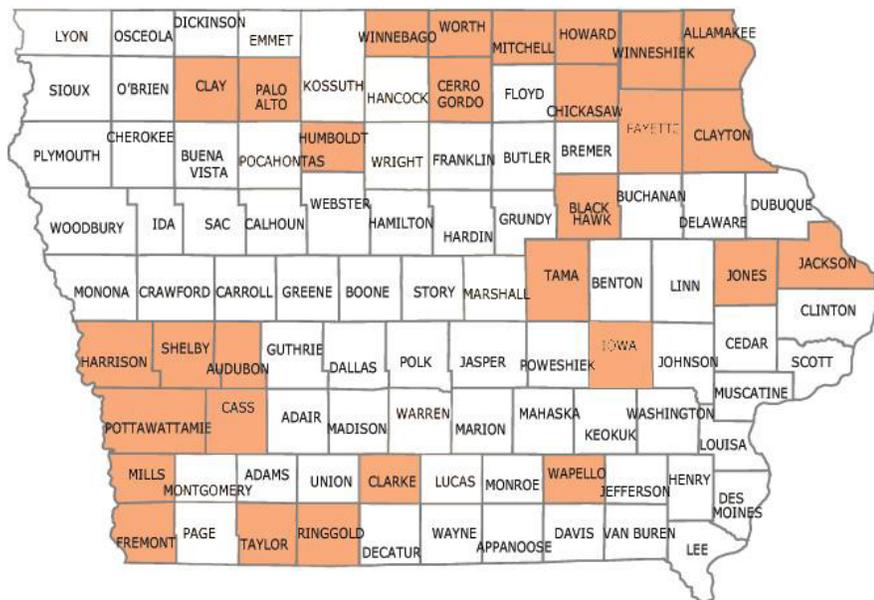


The State WLL Team from L to R. Front row, Jackie, Carol, Laura. Back row, Heather, Kay, Corry, Tanya, Beth.

Jackie Suckow is the Communications and Outreach Coordinator with the Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship, in the Division of Soil Conservation .

Heather Honkomp is the Assistant to the State Director of USDA Rural Development. She has been with the agency for 21 years.

Participating Counties in Iowa (Shaded Orange)



PARDON OUR MESS
We are remodeling our website to provide better resources!
www.womenlandandlegacy.org



What is WLL? continued from page 1...

Based on evaluation data collected from 323 participants and partners in 2009, WLL learned:

- 1 in 3 learning session participants increased their land rent as a result of attending the sessions.
- 1 in 5 learning session participants modified their estate plan or created a new one
- 1 in 5 made more educated farm management decisions including improved recordkeeping, limiting liability, selling crops, writing goals, and exploring other farming options.
- 1 in 10 learning session participants implemented new conservation practices on their land
- 1 in 10 learning session respondents took on a new leadership role in their community (by serving on soil and water conservation district boards, county Extension Councils, Farm Bureau boards, school boards, etc.)

We measured attitude changes as well. We learned that:

- 1 in 5 learning session participants say farm service providers in their area are treating women in agriculture with more respect.
- Nearly 3 in 5 agree their own attitude toward farm service providers has improved.
- Agencies are beginning to understand and respect women's farming values and skills at a deeper level as a result of increased trust and interaction. As a result, agencies are having opportunities to serve more women than they were before WLL participation.
- Women's attitudes about USDA agency staff and services have improved as have agency staff attitudes about other farm service providers.
- 2 in 3 invited WLL speakers say their participation in WLL has helped their agency, organization, or business become more effective at serving women farmland owners.

Visit the website, www.womenlandandlegacy.org for further research details.

Rural Legacy is a quarterly publication of **Women, Land, & Legacy**. Our vision is to help agricultural women come together to converse, listen, & become empowered to act on their landscape & in their community.

We invite newsletter suggestions & contributions from participants & readers.

The newsletter is published each February, May, August, & November.

Email submissions to heather.honkomp@ia.usda.gov, no later than the 15th of the prior month.

www.womenlandandlegacy.org

State Team

Corry Bregendahl, Leopold Center
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 Tanya Meyer Dideriksen, USDA NRCS
 Beth Grabau, USDA FSA
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WLL Receives Grant, continued from page 1...

Based on that input, the state team will assist the local teams organize and conduct a learning session on a top-priority topic. By September 30, 2014, this project will assist small businesses create, retain or expand at least 5 jobs.

Other accomplishments planned for this grant project include new WLL publicity materials, an updated website, and training on social media such as Facebook. Throughout the project, the team will assess activities and accomplishments to provide the basis for continuous improvement. Documenting past WLL outcomes provides evidence-based information which helps agencies and organizations better serve women business owners, as they strive to meet their goals for their families, communities, businesses and their land.

Project partners include:

- USDA Farm Service Agency
- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA Rural Development
- Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship Division of Soil Conservation
- Carol Richardson Smith, process design consultant
- Iowa Valley RC&D

Progress updates on this project will continue to be published in this quarterly WLL newsletter.

About WLL

Women, Land, & Legacy reaches out and helps agricultural women come together to converse, listen, and become empowered to act on their landscape and in their communities.

Nearly half of Iowa farmland is owned by women with strong values and vision for their land, their communities, and their future. Women who participate in WLL are as diverse as their ownership. There are widows; managers of land inherited from parents in sibling networks; those actively farming on their own or in partnership with spouses or other family; new or beginning farmers; plus those in non-traditional agriculture.

Reaching all of them with the education and tools they need to actively manage their land, act in their communities, and achieve their goals has been a difficult task for service providers and agency personnel. While opportunities for women have increased in Iowa, they have almost all been focused on conferences and regional/statewide gatherings or on programs/projects to assist women in acquiring skills delivered in a specific time frame, a somewhat piecemeal approach.

Tidbits

- ☞ Newsletters & more may be viewed online at www.womenlandandlegacy.org.
- ☞ Check out our Facebook page! www.facebook.com/womenlandandlegacy
- ☞ Have you completed our survey yet? <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WLLFacebookSurvey>
- ☞ Please send us your ideas, requests, group news, & success stories!
- ☞ The next newsletter deadline is January 15, 2013.

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