

from the director

Leadership Wisconsin

—Mark D. O’Connell, Executive Director, Wisconsin Counties Association



In an environment of shifting demographics revealing a shortage of well-trained young leaders, one organization quietly and without fanfare has been training quality leaders for Wisconsin’s future for more than 30 years. Leadership Wisconsin has put into practice “The Wisconsin Idea”—the principle that education should influence people’s lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom.

Specifically, Leadership Wisconsin’s mission is to connect, cultivate, and amplify the effectiveness of leaders through their educational programming. Their programming is high quality, cutting edge, relevant, and timely. Their organization has continued to look

to the future in order to best position themselves to provide leadership that is relevant for future leaders in Wisconsin.

I am proud of the over 10 years that the Wisconsin Counties Association has partnered with Leadership Wisconsin and look forward to continuing to work with an organization that not only trains good leaders, but exemplifies what good leadership is all about.

That all said, do not take my word for it, I will let them speak for themselves. The articles that follow are the beginning of a series from staff and participants alike highlighting the latest educational opportunities provided by this top-notch organization.



Changing lives. Changing communities.

Team Studies in Washington, D.C.

—Sarah Schlosser, Executive Director, Leadership Wisconsin & Mary Hookham, Group XVII Fellow, Leadership Wisconsin Signature Program

In April, twelve Wisconsin leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. to explore National Policy. The trip is part of a 2-year leadership development experience offered by Leadership Wisconsin. An educational non-profit affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Leadership Wisconsin has taken leaders to D.C. for over 30 years. This year’s program participants

broke into groups, each studying issues near and dear to their hearts and their communities. One group looked at the intersection of agriculture and natural resources, another at community and economic development, and a third at water issues. Each group began exploring their topics during a January State Policy seminar in Madison. The objective was to build upon their state-level understanding in

D.C. through visits with elected officials, think tanks, federal agencies, lobbying groups, non-profits, and other entities. This feature is the beginning of a series of articles where the Leadership Wisconsin groups will share their stories.

In addition to Mary Hookham, who will be featured first, four other leaders studied the agriculture and natural resources intersection – Veronica Chavez, a nail

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Pictured (left to right): Mary Hookham, Linda Zillmer, Alison Duff, Veronica Chavez and Jan Dworschak.

salon owner in Madison; Alison Duff, an ecologist with the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center; Jan Dworschak, a music minister in Arcadia; and Linda Zillmer, an active citizen in Washburn County. You can read about these leaders and their seminar experiences at <http://leadershipwisconsin.org/programs-events/signature-program>. This September, they will travel to California to examine food systems using a tool adapted by the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Cooperative

Extension Food Systems Team called “Whole Measures.” The tool examines food systems from the lenses of justice and fairness, healthy people, strong communities, sustainable ecosystems, thriving local economies, and vibrant farms and gardens. Their goal is to bring back what they learn and apply it in their own communities across Wisconsin. Enjoy the start of our series in Wisconsin Counties below and to learn more about Leadership Wisconsin go to www.LeadershipWisconsin.org

In the Field: Group XVII

-Mary Hookham, Group XVII Fellow, Leadership Wisconsin Signature Program

Hookham is a freelance agriculture journalist and photographer living in Rock County. She grew up on a small beef and chicken farm near Footville, Wisconsin where she worked with her family to care for 50 head of cattle and 200 chickens.

Members of the agriculture and natural resource team had several good appointments with professionals while in Washington, D.C. As we traveled from office to office, we listened to each other’s stories and bonded over our common interests of policy creation and implementation at the intersection of agriculture and natural resources.

Our first visit was with Denise Tillman at the United States Department of Agriculture. She provided us with plenty of facts about food and nutrition services in America. For example, in Fiscal Year 2016,



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Leadership Wisconsin's SIGNATURE PROGRAM

Leadership Wisconsin's Signature Program is designed for residents from diverse backgrounds who share a strong desire to actively participate in meeting the challenges facing their organizations and communities. The 2-year, hands-on leadership development experience takes leaders out of the traditional classroom and exposes them to people, places, ideas, and issues they might not otherwise encounter.

the federal government spent \$108 billion to fund and operate nutrition assistance programs, representing more than 70% of the USDA's expenditures. Food and nutrition service programs served 1 in 4 Americans last year. Tillman talked about various food assistance programs such as SNAP, WIC, as well as the national school lunch program, school breakfast program, child and adult care food program, summer food service program, food distribution program on Indian reservations, emergency food assistance program, and commodity supplemental food program.

Jimmy Bramblett, deputy chief for programs with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, visited with us about technical and financial assistance programs available and science-based conservation plans. We also learned that soil health is essential for high-quality conservation.

Moving on, the group visited with Leslie Deavers, farm bill coordinator with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She expressed the importance of open dialogues and flexibility in regulation creation when writing farm bills. As an anti-hunger advocate, Beavers is helping to invite members of Congress to visit their constituents' food assistance program sites in their specific states or districts. This effort is intended to show members of Congress how critical these programs are for constituents of all ages.

In our adventures, we also learned about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly referred to as food stamps. During our conversations with various professionals about this program, Fellow Veronica Chavez came to life, sharing the story of her son's health issues and her desire for healthier lifestyles for Latina women and children. Her passion for her son, motivation to be part of the solution, and dedication to this issue were evident as we moved between offices and learned about these programs.

We wrapped up our small-group learning effort by visiting with Taylor Amos, international policy analyst, and Marlysa Gamblin, domestic advisor for policy and programs, both with Bread for the World. These ladies told us that every day 1 in 5 people around the world are food insecure and globally 767 million live in extreme poverty. Further, they opined that many hunger and poverty-reduction programs will be in jeopardy over the next few years with the Trump Administration in place. Amos and Gamblin suggested direct lobbying to members of the legislature, grassroots organizing, and community outreach as ways to advocate for these programs. All in all, it the trip was a wonderful learning opportunity!

To learn more about Leadership Wisconsin go to www.LeadershipWisconsin.org