Giving New Life to Rural Indiana

Every small town in the U.S. started for an economic purpose, often to serve local farm families. Many of you grew up in a town like this, as I did. But as the number of farms declined and manufacturing plants shut down or moved elsewhere, people began to move to larger urban areas. Residents left behind face many problems: unemployment, lack of basic services those living in cities take for granted and poverty.

This special issue of Agricultures showcases some of the ways that Purdue Agriculture and Purdue Extension programs are giving new life to rural Indiana.

- Several counties offer a Getting Ahead program that has helped long-term unemployed residents get back into the workforce and out of poverty.
- Specialists and researchers from across Purdue's campus are writing a series of Purdue Extension publications about the problems facing rural Indiana to help local leaders generate communitywide discussion of issues and determine courses of action.
- Purdue Extension provides technical and business expertise to entrepreneurs and new agricultural enterprises. And the Purdue Center for Regional Development, with whom we are closely allied, helps “home-grown” companies expand.
- Ag alumni who return to their hometowns to work and live not only contribute to local economies, but also bring the leadership skills and dedication to position their communities for the future.

State and county financial investment help make research and Extension programs possible. Research and education will help the state increase economic development, add jobs in food and agricultural industries, and enhance Hoosiers' well-being.

Jay Akridge
Glenn W. Sample Dean of Agriculture

For more about the topics in this issue, see expanded coverage on the Agricultures website, agriculture.purdue.edu/rural.
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Enhancing public spaces

Public spaces play a vital role in all our lives—they are the paths we bike on, the public parks we play in and the town centers where we shop. Decisions about how to design and manage these spaces can have long-term impacts on the social, economic and environmental health of our communities.

To help local decision-makers harness the power of public spaces, Purdue Extension has launched a new program called Enhancing the Value of Public Spaces. This training program offers continuing education and resources tailored to regional, community, business and neighborhood leaders interested in building sustainable communities.

“This program helps regions, communities and neighborhoods preserve and enhance assets that define the area,” said Kara Salazar, sustainable communities specialist for Purdue Extension and Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant.

The first series of workshops was held in January and February. For more information on future trainings, contact Salazar at salazark@purdue.edu.

Anjanette Riley

Fertile field awaits ag education graduates

A shortage of qualified teachers for high school agriculture programs across the nation has prompted efforts to encourage more students to study agricultural education.

“We have about 20 graduates annually, while for the last two years combined there were more than 50 openings for agriculture teachers in Indiana,” said Allen Talbert, professor of agricultural education at Purdue University.

The demand comes as more agriculture teachers are retiring and agricultural education programs at the high school level are increasing. While the need for agriculture teachers is greatest in rural areas, the dearth of teachers is not limited to smaller, country schools. Urban and suburban schools are also increasing agriculture programs.

Reasons why more students may not be pursuing careers in agricultural education vary from the perception of low teacher pay to concern over the number of hours that teachers must put in with little control over their schedules.

The low pay issue, though, may not be valid, as the average starting salary for Purdue’s teacher education graduates last year was about $38,000, which matched the average for the College of Agriculture as a whole.

Beth Forbes

Due to a shortage of agriculture teachers in Indiana and other states, agricultural education graduates can pick from a bumper crop of job opportunities.
Cultivating growing businesses

Luring new business isn’t the only economic development strategy available to Indiana communities. The Purdue Center for Regional Development is launching the Indiana Business Growth Network, which provides a network of support services to help existing companies grow. The program is currently being pilot-tested through a partnership with the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce.

IBGN focuses on second-stage companies—businesses beyond the start-up phase and poised for growth, and often an overlooked source of economic development. “They are big enough to have big-company problems, but not big enough to have in-house solutions,” said Scott Hutcheson, the center’s assistant director.

IBGN’s grow-from-within strategy involves helping company leaders address strategic challenges, like developing new markets, refining business models and accessing competitive intelligence.

“We want to keep existing companies here, and programs like this create an avenue for them to grow,” said Jody Hamilton, director of economic development with Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. “It’s a great asset in our toolbox when we’re working with businesses in the community and the region.”

Engagements are short, intense and highly focused on each participating company’s biggest issues. A team of four or five IBGN experts can evaluate markets, run competitor intelligence, follow industry trends and new product releases, track regulations, assist with search engine optimization and Web marketing, set up social media campaigns, map customer locations and densities, and evaluate core business strategies. They also conduct a wide variety of custom research.

As the hub of the network, PCRD works closely with the Hoosier Heartland Small Business Development Center, Purdue’s Parrish Library of Management & Economics, and other partners to deliver the business-growth services. “We have so many other resources at Purdue, we can refer companies to these other partners within the university when they need help,” Hutcheson added.

The IBGN team is certified through the Edward Lowe Foundation, which terms this entrepreneurial approach to regional prosperity “economic gardening.” They aren’t horticulturists by any stretch, but IBGN intends to become Indiana’s first and only certified team of economic gardeners, cultivating economic development.

Nancy Alexander

Grants fund ag, rural development projects

Purdue Agriculture has awarded $1 million in state-funded grants for a wide variety of projects designed to advance Indiana’s leadership in plant and animal agriculture and rural development.

The grants were awarded in the initiative called AgSEED, short for Agricultural Science and Extension for Economic Development. The state Legislature funded AgSEED in 2013 through the state’s Crossroads program as part of Indiana’s commitment to agriculture and rural development.

The research supported through AgSEED will foster Indiana’s leadership in areas that have a direct impact on plant and animal agriculture and rural development, said Karen Plaut, senior associate dean for research in the College of Agriculture.

Keith Robinson
A New Life

Rural Indiana Has Its Challenges—and Opportunities

By Keith Robinson

Walking down Main Street in some rural Indiana towns often brings an empty feeling from seeing vacant storefronts that years ago sported mannequins modeling the latest dresses, sport coats and shoes for window shoppers. A restaurant was open from morning to night, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner. There was a furniture store, perhaps a jewelry store, a hardware store, a five-and-dime with a soda fountain, a movie theater. Downtown was busy.

Most of those businesses are long gone now in many rural communities, where a thriving downtown is but a memory, at least for those who have been around long enough to know their town’s glory days. For the young, the sight of empty buildings is how it has always been.

Such towns need new life. They are showing their age, not just in their deteriorating buildings but also in the faces of the growing number of the elderly as people live longer and the swelled ranks of the baby-boom generation advance into their 60s and 70s.

“Aging in itself is not bad. We like it that people are getting older,” says Brigitte Waldorf, a Purdue University agricultural economics professor who conducts research into a variety of demographic topics, such as population, employment, immigration, and rural and urban issues. “Everybody wants to have that long life.”

A Depleted Workforce

But as a growing number of people retire, they leave a hole in the workforce. The problem is exacerbated by young people who feel that there is little reason for them to stay in their small town; they have no prospect of a high-paying, professional job—no career there. So they leave for opportunities elsewhere, often out of state, creating an even bigger void in the local workforce.

“Young people in rural areas want broad economic choices,” Waldorf says. “They want to explore the world, and they most certainly will have more choices if they move to Los Angeles or Indianapolis or Chicago. If they stay in rural Indiana, the choices are very limited.”
The combination of older people retiring and younger people leaving is a big disadvantage for small, rural communities trying to attract businesses vital to economic development. If companies don’t see a workforce, they’re likely to stay away.

“And since they don’t come, the young people are more willing to leave,” Waldorf says.

It’s a cycle hard to reverse. Although there is economic development in some rural areas, much of it is from urban areas such as Indianapolis getting bigger—both in area and population—and expanding outward in the form of suburbs. Farms that once lined the rural landscape on the outskirts of the city are now subdivisions and shopping centers as Indiana becomes more “urbanized”—at least in regions that have urban areas.

To be sure, there are those who prefer to live in rural America for reasons very close to them—heritage, family, traditional values, the space, the farm, the peace, the quiet. Life there very much is their life; they wouldn’t have it any

Delphi, Ind., is a small-town success story, with more than $18 million in redevelopment projects underway. Mayor Randy Strasser says the renovated opera house will become a community center. The left portion of the merged photo is an artist’s rendering showing the rundown space restored to its 1882 former glory.

Artist’s rendering courtesy Delphi Preservation Society; photo by Tom Campbell
other way. Rural living still is not hard to find for those seeking it; less than 14 percent of Indiana's population of 6.48 million people live in the 42 most rural counties, according to Purdue researchers who are producing a series of publications reporting on issues facing rural Indiana.

**Extension Examines the Issues**

The purpose of Purdue Extension's Rural Indiana Issues series is to help state and local leaders better tackle the many problems facing people in the most rural counties: poverty; lack of community development; inability to attract business; school closures; not enough volunteers to help staff food pantries and provide other services to people in need; fewer banks; and limited access to health care, healthy food and even broadband Internet service, which young, urban dwellers consider essential to their being.

“Hopefully, this will help provide new insights on specific issues,” says Janet Ayres, a Purdue Extension agricultural economics specialist whose work focuses on leadership and economic development in rural Indiana.

Ayres, who is overseeing the project that involves specialists and researchers throughout Purdue's campus, says local leaders might benefit the most from the information, spurring communitywide discussion of issues and helping them to determine courses of action.

“Local leaders need to delve more deeply into the trends in the community and what it means for their future so that their communities can be better prepared,” Ayres says.

**Planning for the Long Haul**

Delphi, the seat of Carroll County in north-central Indiana, is one rural community that is taking stock of itself and seizing opportunities where it finds them. While the widening of state Route 25 in 2013 and its rerouting around the city as part of the Hoosier Heartland Highway has meant less traffic through downtown, local leaders years ago saw that as a good thing coming, not a death knell for their city. That is because much of the traffic was from heavy trucks that caused congestion and posed safety hazards for pedestrians.

“It held us back from some of the things we wanted to do downtown,” says Mayor Randy Strasser. “The Heartland removes a lot of those trucks.” That has enabled local leaders to plan improvements and attractions to make Delphi, as Strasser puts it, “a more walking-friendly community.”

The state has designated Delphi as one of six Stellar Communities for its plans, which include a new downtown
Delphi Mayor Randy Strasser stands in the once-opulent opera house. The 1800s-era venue is undergoing a $4 million renovation. Town officials and civic leaders hope a variety of improvement projects will entice visitors to stop in Delphi rather than drive through it.

Delphi’s projects are expected to be completed in 2016 and cost $18 million. That includes $2.4 million from the city and $1.5 million the Delphi Preservation Society is contributing toward the $4 million renovation of the opera house, which Strasser calls the linchpin of the development initiative. Plans are for the opera house to become a community center, with a stage for plays and concerts, and to be a site for wedding receptions and other events.

The city envisions the projects leading to other long-term improvements—new shops, loft apartments, restaurants with outdoor dining—all bringing more visitors walking the downtown instead of driving through it.

Ayres says local leaders wanting to initiate such development projects need broad-based support and involvement of the community.

“This requires some planning and some organization and some leadership, which is absolutely key,” Ayres says, “and bringing the people together to see those opportunities.”

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Tour a rural community agriculture.purdue.edu/rural
Land of Opportunity

Pioneers Necessary for a New Era of Rural Prosperity

By Beth Forbes

It was the turbulent 1980s, a difficult time to live off the land. Despite rough economic conditions, a dairy farmer managed to keep his 50-head operation afloat. But sitting at the kitchen table in his northeast Iowa farmhouse one night, he looked at his two sons. “In order to keep this farm,” he said, “we are going to have to go from 50 cows to 500. Which one of you wants to come back to the farm?”

Jason Henderson was one of those two young brothers—at that kitchen table he was literally sitting at a crossroads in his life. “Neither one of us wanted to return to the farm,” he remembers. “My dad ended up selling the farm, and my brother and I became part of the ‘lost generation.’”

That is how Henderson, now years later and director of Purdue Extension, describes the exodus of talented young people from the nation’s rural areas. A version of this tale has played out many times throughout the Midwest. Many of the best and brightest rural teens head off to college after high school graduation, never to return.

While he didn’t see it 30 years ago, Henderson says now there are opportunities for young people to make their futures in rural communities and for these small patches of Americana to prosper. “The rural areas have resources and value to offer; they may just need to be packaged differently today,” he says.

Outside the Box

Traditionally, rural communities were tied to agriculture and the many businesses and services that supported it. Henderson says the future now for folks in these small towns and surrounding areas likely will be found outside the box. “The mindset has to change. They must think like entrepreneurs and take risks,” he says. “They must become the pioneers of the 21st century.”

Just like their ancestors 200 years ago, those out in rural areas must blaze a trail, build something new and discover new paths to prosperity.

Continued on page 11
“Healthy rural communities are those that provide economic opportunities both at the farm gate and on Main Street.”

Jason Henderson
Director, Purdue Extension
Lionel “Bo” Beaulieu, director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development, was named to also lead Purdue Extension’s Economic and Community Development program area.

Beaulieu's leadership strengthens efforts in community and regional development

By Olivia Maddox

Lionel “Bo” Beaulieu spent 36 years working in Florida and the Deep South, yet his voice still has a trace of accent from his native Maine, where he lived in Biddeford until leaving for college in 1969.

While he hasn’t lived in Biddeford for many years, like his accent, his experience growing up in the struggling manufacturing town stayed with him. “Textile manufacturing was moving to the South,” he says. “Biddeford was a one-industry town, and it never rebounded. It’s still struggling today.”

Beaulieu remained in New England for college, majoring in sociology at Saint Anselm College, a small, private school in Manchester, N.H. “When I began researching graduate schools, Purdue percolated to the top,” he says, even though he admits he wasn’t exactly sure what a “land-grant” university was.

But he was intrigued by the opportunity to join faculty in the agricultural economics department as their first ever graduate research assistant recruited from Purdue’s sociology department. The assistantship introduced him to what ultimately became his passion—community and rural development research and engagement. After earning a master’s degree, he stayed on to complete a Ph.D. Beaulieu became committed to interdisciplinary work and the pursuit of research, Extension and teaching—the hallmarks of the land-grant university mission.

“I was never satisfied with a singular focus on research,” he says. “I wanted to follow through and apply the research in hopes of tackling the important issues impacting communities. I wanted to make a difference in people’s lives.”

Beaulieu returned to his alma mater in April 2013 as director of the Purdue Center for Regional Development. PCRD seeks to pioneer new ideas and strategies that contribute to regional collaboration, innovation and prosperity. “The Indiana economy is growing, but pockets are still struggling,” Beaulieu says. “Not all communities can do the same thing economically. PCRD helps align economic development strategies to existing assets of communities and regions. There’s economic strength in numbers,” he says.

On Feb. 1, Beaulieu took another step closer to his Purdue roots when he was tapped to also lead Purdue Extension’s Economic and Community Development program area. The appointment is intended to strengthen the working ties between PCRD and Extension ECD activities.

Beaulieu says Extension’s presence in every county will help provide “boots on the ground” to deliver both Extension and PCRD programs. “The synergy makes sense since it enhances our ability to connect our research and educational programs with the outreach efforts of a talented corps of county-based Extension educators. There’s so much capability at Purdue, talented people in administration, faculty and staff, to carry this out.”

Beaulieu was at the University of Florida from 1977-97, where he was involved in community development research, Extension and teaching. He left Florida to become director and professor at the Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University. He was there from 1997-2013.

Last year wasn’t the first time Purdue has attempted to entice Beaulieu back to campus, but this time, he says, he couldn’t say no.

“It was time for me to give back to the university that has done so much for me,” he says. “Being a Purdue graduate opened doors for me. With the Purdue name, you gain respect immediately in the land-grant system. The training I received here prepared me to have a successful and rewarding career.”

It was an ideal time for him and his wife Barbara—whom he met while both were students at Purdue—to return to Indiana, he says. “I wanted to dedicate the rest of my career to being a member of the Purdue family.”
Land of Opportunity
continued from page 8

For Henderson, the path from his family dairy farm led first to a small Iowa college and an economics degree and later to advanced degrees at Purdue. Then came a stint working for the Federal Reserve. There, he took part in what was called a “grand experiment” as he tried to create an extension-like service for bankers predominately located in rural areas. That experience cemented an appreciation for the land-grant system and university-based research. “I knew the value of research-based information and how sharing it with the public helped people better raise their families and improve their lives and businesses,” he says. Coming to Purdue Extension, he says, “I’m part of something that moves the world.”

Facilitating Change

In his new role, Henderson says Purdue Extension can facilitate some of the necessary change in rural America. “There are many opportunities for those in non-urban areas, and we in Purdue Extension can help local leaders and businesses be creative and find ways to add value to the resources they have,” he points out.

To be successful, rural communities need educated and skilled entrepreneurial talent. He says the shining stars in economic development outside the bigger towns and cities are communities with technical workers and good schools, and access to quality healthcare, shopping and recreational opportunities. Those not so lucky are isolated by lack of roads, broadband access or education.

Fortunately, Henderson says Indiana’s landscape is advantageous and may help many Hoosier communities fare better than those in surrounding states.

“Most Indiana communities are within decent driving distance of the resources that people need,” he says. “And with the necessities in place, the secret to economic prosperity lies in finding the right mix of people and prospects. The challenge is to help folks find the unique opportunities that can benefit their region while evolving to adapt to new technology and demographic changes.”

Henderson hasn’t lived on a farm since his youth, but he says the message he received as a teenager—there is nothing here for you—is not the same memo that should go out to kids today. “I would encourage my own children to move into rural areas if that were their dream,” he says.

According to Henderson, for Purdue Extension to help make dreams a reality means encouraging rural residents to build something new “that hasn’t been seen before,” and invest in the most valuable resource found in the countryside— the people.

Contact Beth Forbes at forbes@purdue.edu
Rural Preservation

Two Families Support Farming Heritage and Local Communities

By Olivia Maddox

Many Purdue Agriculture graduates return to their home communities to work, raise a family and volunteer in the community. Two families who chose this path are helping make rural Indiana a better place to work and live.

Royers Turn Family Livestock Farm into a New Business Venture

For five generations, the Overpeck family has raised livestock in southern Vermillion County, a narrow sliver of land less than 10 miles wide, bordered by Illinois on the west and the Wabash River on the east.

Perry and Susan Overpeck purchased the farm in 1874 and began a modest operation that would rise to a renowned cattle-breeding enterprise under the guidance of their great-grandson Knic (pronounced Nick) Overpeck. Knic’s daughters Nikki and Shelley followed in the family footsteps, showing cattle and learning the family business.

Nikki and her future husband Scott Royer both chose majors in Purdue University’s College of Agriculture and graduated in 1999, Nikki in biochemistry and Scott in animal sciences. Nikki completed a master’s degree in muscle biology at the University of Illinois and then took a job as a pharmaceutical company sales rep. Scott worked as a research scientist for Pfizer.

Before their marriage in 1994, the two were assembling seedstock for a sheep herd and occasionally selling freezer beef to family and friends. But thoughts of returning to the farm in a greater capacity were relegated to “sometime in the future,” Nikki says.

An Unexpected Return

By necessity, that changed in 2000, when Knic died unexpectedly. Scott and Nikki stepped in to help manage the day-to-day operation of the farm. The first 18 months they concentrated on maintaining the status quo as a production cattle operation. “We were just treading water,” says Scott, who took leave from Pfizer.

They found it hard to make a profit on their small sheep flock, yet nearly impossible to find lamb in local grocery stores. The couple discovered a niche market at the same time farmers markets were just gaining a foothold in Indiana. Nikki and Scott began direct marketing lamb and beef to consumers.
It was the start of a journey that would transition the farm back to the basics—pasture-raised, hormone- and antibiotic-free livestock. They mix time-tested and modern strategies to maximize efficiencies and lower costs.

Rural specialists say enterprise and innovation like the Royers showed are among the keys to reviving rural economies. Encouraging homegrown entrepreneurship, providing rich educational opportunities and enhancing quality of life are also essential to help draw people back to rural communities and retain those who might otherwise leave.

**Mixing It Up**

Royer Farm Fresh set up shop on the Overpeck family homestead. A vintage oak table dominates the farmhouse’s former dining room, but instead of place settings, there’s a trio of laptops where Nikki, Scott and Amber Mosher, a 2013 Purdue animal production graduate, handle business, sales and marketing.

“We couldn’t do this without the Internet and smart phones,” says Nikki, gesturing to the laptops. “People use the Internet to find out about us, and we like to meet them face to face.”

They started out selling beef and lamb at farmers markets in the Indianapolis area and Terre Haute. “Then people told us they also wanted bacon,” Nikki relates. “Then, they wanted eggs with their bacon. Next, it was boneless, skinless chicken breasts. We were getting direct consumer feedback.”

Scott said the feedback forced them out of their comfort zone, and they expanded to include swine and chickens. “Our customers knew us, trusted us and wanted to buy from us,” he says. “If we were going to make the trip to Indianapolis (to farmers markets), we might as well make it worth our while.”

They breed their own sheep and cattle but buy feeder pigs from a local breeder. They work with another farmer to supply brown eggs, though they raise their own broiler chickens. “Partnering with other producers and pooling our resources makes sense,” Nikki says. Similarly, they no longer raise crops but buy corn and hay from neighbors.
“We do what we do best,” she says. “And we let them do what they do best.”

These strategic moves have helped make the business profitable. They ran the business part time until it was feasible for first Scott and then Nikki to leave secure jobs in industry. “We took a lot of time to plan and took the training wheels off slowly,” Scott says.

Community Connections

Royer Farm Fresh sells about 40,000 pounds of meat a year. However, they keep inventory low and don’t stockpile. “We target animals more ready for market, so the meat is fresh,” Nikki says.

The Royers are part of a small business lifecycle, both customer and seller in their rural county. “Early on, it was about making a living and raising good food,” Nikki says. “Now it’s also about making a difference in the community.”

Community Connections

Tom McKinney was raised in a family where living in a community also meant giving back to the community. There are few nonprofit and charitable causes that he hasn’t served over the years. “You’ve missed out if you haven’t given back,” he says.

Generations of Farming and Service Unite McKinneys, Tipton County

Tom McKinney is a seventh-generation farmer and third-generation Purdue Agriculture graduate—two distinctions that have influenced him all his life.

The first McKinney to settle in Clinton County was a blacksmith—his anvil, double-oxen yoke and muzzleloader are still in the family. His mother Judy’s Kirkpatrick family roots are nearly as deep, going back five generations. The McKinney farm expanded into Tipton County, where Tom’s parents raised their family.

Tom and his three siblings—twin brother Ted, Mike and Becky—are all involved in food and agriculture, but Tom is the only one who returned to the farm. After completing a bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics in 1980, Tom says there was no doubt he would carry on the family legacy.

On the state level, Tom followed his mother’s footsteps to advocate for his alma mater on the Purdue Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching, known as PCARET, and served as president last year. He’s currently president of the Indiana 4-H Foundation board of directors; 4-H, too, taught him the values of leadership and service during his youth.

As a youngster, he was learning how to serve the community by watching—and helping—his parents. There are few nonprofit organizations in Tipton County that Tom hasn’t come into contact with over the years, either directly or through the boards of First National Bank and Trust, the Tipton Community School Building Corp., Purdue Extension-Tipton County and the Tipton County Foundation.

Small but Mighty

Tipton County, located in north central Indiana, is among the state’s most rural counties, as determined by Purdue research analyzing 2010 U.S. Census data. With a population under 16,000, it ranks among the 10 least populated counties in the state.

But thanks to the foresight of community leaders like McKinney, the county is at the top of one list—it’s home to the largest per capita foundation in Indiana. The Tipton County Foundation funds charitable causes and makes improvements that affect quality of life for residents, dispersing more than $1 million annually back into the community.

The foundation takes care of community needs, says Tom, who is serving his second term on the board. While grants support the Boys & Girls Club and prescriptions for senior citizens, for example, they also address special causes, such as flood relief.

Other grant recipients include the Tipton County Education Center—a partnership with Purdue Extension—and the C.W. Mount Community Center, two of the county’s community development gems.

Tom was on the ground floor of planning many major building projects in the county through either the foundation or his role at the bank. These projects carried over into his volunteer work through his financial background in agribusiness and “because there was a need,” he says.

The learning center provides access to college courses from a number of state and private universities, as well as classes related to workforce skills; math, reading and computer literacy; and personal enrichment.
Families Share Purdue Legacy

Like his forefathers, Vermillion County farmer Knic Overpeck was an accomplished livestock judge. In 1961, the animal sciences major won the individual title at the National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest for Purdue University. Knic’s record score still stands more than 50 years later.

Nikki Overpeck was just a toddler when her dad Knic showed 4-Z, the 1971 grand champion steer at the International Livestock Exposition in Chicago. Other championships would follow, and he judged livestock competitions throughout North America. After his death, the Simmental Breeder’s Sweepstakes named a prestigious championship—the Knic Overpeck Supreme Champion—in his honor.

Nikki followed her dad’s path to Purdue Agriculture, graduating in 1992 with a degree in biochemistry. She married Scott Royer ‘92, who, like her dad, was an animal sciences major.

Tom McKinney’s Kirkpatrick ancestors moved from Illinois to Indiana for better educational opportunities. Their goal was realized when Tom’s grandfather, Frank Kirkpatrick of Frankfort, Ind., became a Purdue student, majoring in animal husbandry. He met Mary Bishop, a home economics major from Arcadia, Ind.

Purdue had no campus housing for female students in the early years, so Mary boarded with John Carroll Latta—recognized as the father of Purdue Agriculture and Extension—and his family as a nanny and household helper.

Frank and Mary, both 1923 graduates, married, and their daughter Judy followed in their footsteps. Judy ‘54 majored in home economics and married animal husbandry major Mark McKinney ‘53. Their four children became third-generation Purdue Agriculture students: Mike ‘80, through a cooperative program with John Deere, Tom ‘80 and Ted ‘81 in agricultural economics, and Becky ‘93 in ABE and biochemistry.

Tom’s future father-in-law, Dorman Rogers, a 1951 graduate in agricultural education, was vice principal at Tipton High School when Tom was a student.

Tom was among the local leaders who determined how to best use funds willed to the county by Tipton native and former circuit court judge C.W. Mount. His estate designated funds for a community center that would provide activities for residents from youth to senior citizens.

Scholarly Collaborations

Tipton schools continue to be important to Tom and his wife Karen. It’s where they both attended classes and began dating in high school. Karen, a former teacher, is a member of the school board. Tom served on the school corporation’s building committee through projects that united the high school, middle school and elementary school onto one campus.

“We’re a team,” Tom says of their joint philanthropic interests that include education, 4-H, church and causes that aid disabled persons.

Three years ago, Tom became even more involved in the schools when Tipton High School’s agriculture teacher, who advised the FFA chapter, left midway through the school year. Tom stepped in to serve as adviser, assisted by Tipton County resident Deborah Kuhn. He also recruited other producers to coach in their crop or livestock specialty areas. It was a community effort, Tom says. “People responded and asked, ‘how can I help?’”

Modeling for Future Generations

Though farming often means long days in the field, Tom says being self-employed also gives him the freedom to volunteer his time, whether it’s making financial decisions in the boardroom or helping rebuild a wounded veteran’s home.

His parents, teachers, FFA advisers and 4-H leaders were examples for him to follow into a lifetime of community service. He hopes that what he’s been able to do will provide an example for the next generation.

“I hope they will become more involved and provide continuity of leadership in Tipton County for the years to come,” he says. “You’ve missed out if you haven’t given back.”

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Paths Out of Poverty

Extension Workshops Offer Wealth of Resources to Hard-Up Hoosiers

By Natalie van Hoose

Larissa Williams of Huntington, Ind., was in a canoe without paddles, headed over the edge of a thundering waterfall, when she showed up to the first day of a Getting Ahead class led by Purdue Extension.

At least, that is how she felt at the time.

A college-educated wife and mother of two, Williams was struggling to get back on her feet after a disability had kept her out of the workplace for several years. She wanted to become a certified nurse assistant, but life below the poverty line had bankrupted her self-esteem.

“I was scared,” she says. “Not being able to work made me feel like a loser. I didn’t want to crash and burn.”

She expected Getting Ahead—billed as a class on financial stability—to offer tips for fine-tuning her résumé and building a budget. But the class surprised her.

“Getting Ahead is not just about getting a job,” she says. “It teaches you social skills, how to network, how to build friendships and how to get the resources you need to make a better life for yourself. Getting Ahead shows you what you didn’t know.”

Thanks to the class, Williams realized that her habit of avoiding eye contact made her appear insecure and shifty, jeopardizing her chances of acing a job interview. But what she most valued was the moral support she received from her fellow participants.

“They asked me if I was getting to my nursing classes, how I was doing. I was accountable to these people.”

The class helped her regain a sense of self-worth, and she successfully completed her nursing assistant certification. She now works in home health care and is financially stable.

“It feel a lot safer,” she says. “I’m still in that canoe, but I’m floating on a peaceful river—and I have paddles.”

Bridging the Class Divide

Building lasting relationships between Huntington County’s middle and lower classes is a full-time job for Purdue Extension educator Karen Hinshaw.

A native of Huntington, she has watched the needs of her home county swell as local factories and companies shut their doors and moved elsewhere, leaving the rural community of 38,000 strapped for jobs.

As a result, many Huntington residents who used to be comfortably middle-income now find themselves in line at the local food pantry.

“To watch people come in feeling worthless and be able to encourage and empower them to figure out who they are, what they want and how to get there—there’s nothing more rewarding than that.”

Karen Hinshaw
Purdue Extension
There’s been a huge increase in the need for food and assistance with rent and utility bills,” Hinshaw says. “Offering the Getting Ahead class is one way that we’re trying to address the reasons why people are not financially stable.”

Tightening the Rust Belt

Huntington County residents are not the only ones to feel the pinch of hard times. Indiana has lagged behind much of the U.S. in its recovery from the economic recession that began in 2007.

Twenty-eight percent of Indiana jobs are poverty-wage, a higher percentage than all neighboring states, including Kentucky. Indiana also has the highest proportion of fast-food jobs per capita in the nation.

At the same time that the state’s once-robust manufacturing industry went into a decline, government-sponsored aid programs shrank, says Derek Thomas, a senior policy analyst for the Indiana Institute for Working Families, a nonpartisan think tank.

“A lot of people were left out in the cold,” he says.

About one in six Hoosiers is now living in poverty, with an annual income of less than $11,000. About 2.24 million—roughly a third of the state—are low-income, and nearly half of Hoosier children live in low-income households.

“This has really been a lost decade for many Indiana families,” Thomas says. “We have a long way to go.”

But according to Hinshaw, rebuilding the financial stability of Hoosier families does not hinge solely on providing economic opportunities. The key to sustainable change, she says, is helping people in poverty identify and access the resources they need. That philosophy is what keeps the door to her Purdue Extension office in downtown Huntington open.

“To watch people come in feeling worthless and be able to encourage and empower them to figure out who they are, what they want and how to get there—there’s nothing more rewarding than that.”

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Purdue Extension's Getting Ahead class helped Larissa Williams turn her life around. She has a new career and a new outlook on life.
Extreme Makeovers

Purdue Extension Helps Rural Communities
Reinvent, Revitalize

By Steve Leer

Darryl Brown has no time to lose on this winter day. Customers are starting to arrive at his rural Fowler, Ind., business, and he’s got to deal with the six inches of snow that fell the day before.

With a sense of urgency, Brown tosses shovelfuls of the white stuff to the right and left until he clears a path from the parking area to the front door of the building. “There, I think we’ve got it. Come on in,” Brown says to a visitor who just pulled up. “At least you won’t have to walk through all that snow.”

If Brown were engaged in a traditional form of his business, he probably would never need to pick up a snow shovel. He likely wouldn’t need a coat, either—waders might suffice. And winter storms? Forget it. He’d be more concerned about tropical depressions and hurricanes.

Aquaculture Success

Brown and his wife Karlanea are the co-owners of RDM Aquaculture LLC. They raise shrimp.

RDM Aquaculture, which started in 2010, operates one of 18 recirculating saltwater shrimp systems in the United States. Every month the company raises about 120,000 baby shrimp, or post-larvans, in six 400-gallon tanks. Eighty percent of those juvenile shrimp are sent on to shrimp farms in 10 states—from New York to Iowa—with the other 20 percent being raised to adulthood and sold on the retail market.

The Browns sell about 300 pounds of shrimp a month to customers who walk into the retail storefront of the RDM Aquaculture building. The shrimp fetch $15 per pound.

“People come from all over to buy,” Karlanea says. “In fact, we just had someone from Mississippi who’d heard about us stop by. We also have a regular customer from Ohio.”

Karlanea is quick to add that none of this would have happened without the assistance of Purdue Extension. In 2009, Purdue Extension educators in Benton County helped convince county officials not to rezone the Browns’ farm from agriculture to general business. Purdue aquaculture researcher Robert Rode
helped the Browns understand shrimp farming technology, and aquaculture specialist Kwamena Quagrainie guided them through the maze of marketing their seafood. The Browns say Purdue is a partner in their success.

“When we’ve had questions they’ve been here for us,” Karlanea says. “They’ve loaned us equipment from their own aquaculture program. We’re now trying to learn how to fly our shrimp to other countries because our business is expanding, and they’ve provided us contacts who can help us find out what we have to do. They’ve just done so much for us.”

RDM Aquaculture is a case study in how Purdue Extension is helping rural Indiana communities reinvent themselves to meet changing consumer demands and the challenges of producing more food for a growing population on fewer acres. The shifting landscape is forcing rural areas to
become more innovative in order to remain economically viable. That, in turn, has led Purdue Extension to think and act more entrepreneurial as well.

**Online Farmers Market**

A recent example of Extension entrepreneurship is Hoosier Harvest Market. Established in 2013 through a U.S. Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant, Hoosier Harvest Market is a membership-based farmer cooperative that connects Indiana producers of specialty foods with consumers interested in purchasing Indiana-grown products.

Farmers and food vendors pay $150 per year to belong to the cooperative, which provides them a place on the Hoosier Harvest Market website to promote and sell their products. The farmers deliver to the aggregation point, and then HHM delivers to buyers at drop-off points. Customers order and pay for the products online.

“We were looking at finding a new way for farmers to market their products in addition to going to a farmers market,” says Roy Ballard, Purdue Extension educator in Hancock County and HHM coordinator. “We like to describe it as ‘a farmers market meets the Internet.’ Hoosier Harvest Market is an online marketplace where you can purchase produce, meats, eggs, cheeses, wheat products, flowers, honey and much more. It’s all grown in the heart of central Indiana and supports local family farms and businesses.”

HHM works like this: The online market is open from noon Friday until midnight on Tuesday. Orders received during that period are sent by email to member-producers. On Thursday, producers deliver the ordered products to the “hub” at the Purdue Extension office in Greenfield, where HHM workers send them on to six designated buyer pickup locations in Hancock and Marion counties. Pickup takes place from 4-7 p.m. on that same evening.

“Farmers are responsible for maintaining their inventories, the quality of the product and the prices they charge—some update them on a regular basis—and they can attend the pickup times and talk to customers if they want to,” Ballard says. “It’s all about giving the farmer and the shopper new and convenient ways to make the connection.”

At the end of 2013, Hoosier Harvest Market boasted 28 producer-members, about half from Hancock County. Michael Morrow, the program’s market manager, said other farmers and food vendors have called him and are interested in joining.

“We have some big plans for 2014,” Morrow says. “We hope to have two delivery days to increase the amount of product that can be sold, and I’ve been talking with YMCA officials about the possibility of establishing up to 11 new pickup locations in the Indianapolis metro area. We’re also ironing out the logistics on a program to sell food to schools. And we’re looking at getting

Jennifer Pinkston picks up her Hoosier Harvest Market order from the Purdue Extension-Hancock County office in Greenfield. Pinkston takes advantage of the food hub to find fresh, local food.
a community garden started in the Indianapolis area, which would allow those who grow vegetables in the garden to benefit from the expertise of Hoosier Harvest Market farmers.”

Robert Engleking of Charlottesville, Ind., raises pasture-and homegrown grain-fed Holstein cattle free of antibiotics, growth hormones and steroids. Engleking and his family sell steaks, roasts, ground beef, pork and eggs through a retail store on their farm. While business is good at Engleking’s Country Beef Shop, Engleking says Hoosier Harvest Market has allowed him to reach new customers who might never have visited the store.

“I’d say our business has increased about 150 percent since we joined the hub,” Engleking says. “It started out slow when we joined last May, but once people began to try our products in the first month or two, it took off.

“We’ve even become customers ourselves and really love the products we buy through the hub. The lettuce is phenomenal. So are the spinach, breads and cheeses. It’s stuff that we don’t grow ourselves.”

**Preserving the Family Farm**

Programs like Hoosier Harvest Market would not exist if there weren’t strong farms to continue filling the food pipeline. Although less visible to the public than the online farmers market, Purdue Extension’s research and educational offerings in farm succession planning focus on keeping today’s farms operating tomorrow.

Passing the farm on to a son, daughter or younger business partner when it’s time for a farmer to retire isn’t as easy as handing over the keys to the barn. The farmer and his or her successor need to work through the financial arrangements, management procedures and, perhaps, even family issues before control of the farm is transferred.

“I always say, ‘Policies before problems,’” says Maria Marshall, a Purdue agricultural economist and succession planning expert. “Passing the land assets on doesn’t necessarily make it a successful transition from one generation to the next.”

Marshall has studied intergenerational farm and non-farm family businesses and found retiring farmers often are more willing to pass the farm on to a child or partner, even if it might place the farmer at greater financial risk. That probably shows the extent to which most older farmers want the farm operation to continue after them.

That emotional investment of farmer to farm has led to such Purdue Extension programs as the Farming Together Workshop series. The workshops bring together the farmer and farm successor, and Extension specialists lead them through sessions on effective communication skills, business organizational structures, working as a team and developing a shared vision for the farm. Before the two-day workshop is over, the farmer and younger partner write a succession plan.

The workshop was invaluable to Dave Forgey, a 70-year-old Logansport dairy farmer who attended with his 40-year-old unrelated farm partner. The partner’s wife also attended.

“One of things that was brought to my attention before the workshop was that my partner’s wife had never been a part of the farming operation. She was working a town job, and he was on the farm,” Forgey says. “It was good she was at that workshop because it became apparent she lacked a lot of knowledge about agriculture. My wife and I, on the other hand, had 40 years, and my partner had 10 years in ag.” Farming Together opened the partner’s wife’s eyes to the financial risks associated with agriculture—risks she had not previously been willing to accept.

“That workshop was a real help in getting us started in the way we wanted to go,” Forgey says. “We wouldn’t have gotten where we are today without it.”

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Great Ideas Get Help

Grants Fill Budget Gaps for Hoosier Communities

By Nancy Alexander

Markine Sipes had some great ideas for MacGregor Park and Nature Preserve in northern Hamilton County. Her quandary, as project coordinator for Washington Township Parks and Recreation, was finding a way to pay for them.

“We thought, there’s all sorts of money out there, and we have all sorts of needs,” Sipes says. “But we knew absolutely nothing about grant writing.”

So Sipes and a colleague invested in a grant-writing workshop developed by Purdue Extension and taught through county-based offices statewide.

“We had already begun work on a federal grant, so we brought it to the class and took off from there,” Sipes says. The result was a $200,000 award from the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Practical, Expert Help

Grant funding can’t fill every budgetary gap, but Indiana municipalities and nonprofit organizations are using Purdue Extension expertise to help them find money for services and infrastructure to help build more livable communities.

Individuals from about 150 Indiana communities have taken advantage of the grant-writing class. Successful proposals total about $9 million in grants of various sizes funding a wide range of needs, such as an upgraded kitchen in a 4-H center, vehicles, medical facilities and playground equipment, and an animal shelter’s veterinary costs.

“A good nonprofit or municipality needs to diversify its revenue streams just like a business,” says Scott Hutcheson, assistant director of Purdue Extension’s Economic and Community Development program. “Many small nonprofits or communities are probably not taking full advantage of funding sources that are out there.”

Although grant-writing training is available online and through other sources, what sets Purdue’s program apart is its affordability and Extension’s understanding of local needs, says Peggy Hosea, project coordinator of the grant-writing training program.

Extension educators also tailor the course to suit their regions. “Extension facilitators have a real desire to be a partner in the community,” Hosea says.
“Say you’re a small rural community that needs a new cow barn at the county fairgrounds. Where does that money come from? Well, we have a resource—people who have a successful track record of getting funding.”

The class takes place over two days a month apart. After a first day packed with the basics of the grant-writing process, attendees are charged to start drafting a proposal for their own potential project.

**Paper to Laptops**

Visits to the nonprofit Matrix Pregnancy Resource Center in Lafayette, Ind., doubled in 2013, to more than 3,000. Such growth prompted its director, Melissa McAtee, and assistant director, Lauren Glynn, to attend Purdue’s grant-writing course.

“We know that we could be doing much more if we’re able to expand our services, our facility and our staffing,” McAtee says. “We are fully funded by individuals and churches, and we wanted to see what else was out there. We needed to update our technology and utilize other sources.”

The $7,499 grant for technology that McAtee and Glynn wrote supports the center’s Earn While You Learn program and increases their service capacity.

“Having laptops that enable us to work and function in any room creates a more efficient, streamlined process,” McAtee says. “Then we can meet with more women.”

**Safe Paths to School**

As communications director and grant writer for the town of Brownsburg in suburban Indianapolis, Annisa Rainey works for every department in the municipality. She came to the newly created position in 2010, when many towns were scrambling to take advantage of stimulus funds.

“Brownsburg is a unique community in that we’re not rural enough, not poor enough and not big enough to qualify for a lot of the funding,” she says. “When it came to writing my first proposal, the Purdue course sounded so hands-on, practical, close and affordable, and the timing was perfect,” she says.

She credits the skills she acquired there with subsequent grants exceeding $338,000, including a $250,000 grant to connect several schools with the public library to make walking and bicycling to school safer for students.

**The Real Work Begins**

With a grant comes obligation. Lydia Armstrong, the Marion County course facilitator, says grant recipients often don’t understand how much follow-through is required. “We try to remind them that whatever you say you’re going to do within the grant, this is your contract,” she says.

Rainey agrees that while grant money is valuable, “You have to have key staff in place who are taking the lead to make sure you’re spending your time wisely in pursuing these funds. You have to ask, ‘Is this a good match for us?’”

When it is, grant funding can make a big difference for Indiana towns and nonprofits. Says Sipes: “In some ways that’s how we’re going to be able to develop and maintain our little part of the world.”

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When Gary Humphrey grew up in New Albany, Ind., during the 1970s, the Ohio River town was already in decline. With few exceptions, the downtown was mostly vacant. Humphrey’s parents often told him stories about the once-thriving center of commerce.

“My mom was very supportive of the downtown merchants,” Humphrey says. “She would always shop there first.”

His parents’ support for the waning downtown stayed with Humphrey. While stationed in California with the U.S. Army, he developed an interest in the wines and wineries so plentiful in the state. After the military, he returned home and joined the New Albany Police Department.

Then, two things from his past converged to influence his future: his continued interest in wineries and the further decline of New Albany’s downtown. Vacations were scheduled around visits to wineries. “I would drive 100 miles out of the way to see small wineries and what they were capable of doing,” he says. And, on the job as an undercover narcotics officer, he witnessed the toll the decay was having on the town. “People would slam the city and say the downtown is dead,” he says.

Reminiscent of his mother’s stalwart support of local businesses, Humphrey believed people would patronize downtown again, given the opportunity.

He thought a winery was just the enterprise that could lead the way back. “You can put a winery in the middle of nowhere, and people will flock to it,” Humphrey says from his own personal experience.

He had his pick of buildings, eventually choosing a two-story neoclassic near the riverfront. During renovation, Humphrey was also boning up on winemaking. River City Winery opened in May 2009.

Humphrey continued to learn from his very first batch, which was a peach wine. “We would make wine from whatever juice or grapes we could get our hands on,” he says. “As a boutique winery, we can make small batches. If it doesn’t work, we blend it into something else.”

Last year, he acquired Eagle Crest Vineyard, near Martinsburg, Ind. With help from a college student, he does all the work at the vineyard, too, where he grows mainly Chambourcin, Traminette and Vignoles.

Humphrey has found success as a vintner, entrepreneur and historic preservationist. His 2011 Vignoles became the first Midwest wine to be named Wine of the Year at the 2012 Indy International Wine Competition. His wines have medaled at the annual event since 2009, winning a total of 40 medals.

River City Winery, which received a historic preservation award in 2009 from the Indiana Landmarks Foundation, kicked off a downtown renaissance. The area is now a vibrant entertainment district, with restaurants, breweries and boutiques in place of vacant storefronts. These entrepreneurs have a model for success. “It was important to me to do it the right way and set the example,” Humphrey says.

Though his parents did not live to see River City Winery and the revival of their cherished downtown, their friends say how much the couple would have loved it.

He takes satisfaction that his instincts were right and his success adds to Indiana’s reputation in the wine industry. “Midwest wineries are on par with any in the nation,” he says.

Humphrey still works full time with the NAPD, in addition to responsibilities at the vineyard and winery. It all started with a serviceman’s appreciation for fine wine. Humphrey says simply, “It’s what one small guy with a dream can do.”
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Nikki (left) and Scott Royer walk the Vermillion County farm where they raise livestock on pasture and sell meat and poultry direct to consumers. Nikki is the fifth generation of her family to make a living on the farm. By also partnering with neighboring producers and small businesses, Royer Farm Fresh is an integral part of the Indiana agricultural economy.

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