

**FLORIDA YARDS & NEIGHBORHOODS (FYN) PROGRAM
ANNUAL REPORT
2007**

I. Overview

This report covers the months of January through December 2007 for the activities of Annemarie Post, Extension Agent (Environmental Horticulture) and Coordinator for the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods (FYN) program, working under the guidelines of the University of Florida /IFAS Sarasota County Extension Service. This program is funded through Sarasota County general funds (\$25,000 provided to general funds by Utilities Department).

Educational assistance is provided to community associations, neighborhoods and associated professionals. In addition, this Extension Agent coordinates the FYN residential program (the "Florida Yard Recognition" program for individual homeowners), and collaborates on program development, presentation and grant funding with the coordinator of the FYN Builder/Developer program, a multi-county, part-time position supporting Charlotte, Manatee and Sarasota counties.

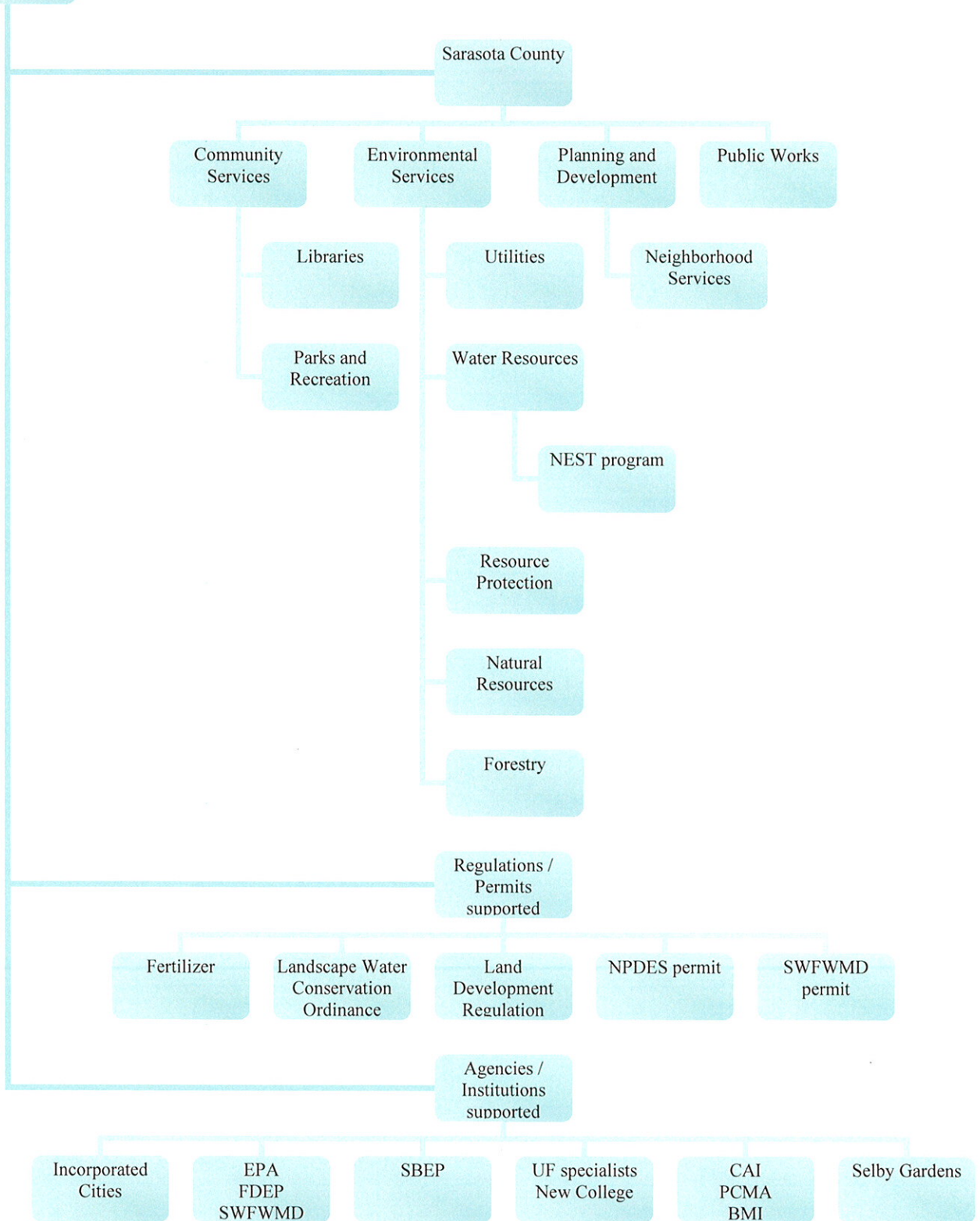
The FYN program is based on Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) practices, and was developed in 1992 by the University of Florida, Sarasota Bay and Tampa Bay National Estuary programs, EPA, FDEP, SWFWMD, and local governments. The main objective of the FYN program is to educate participants on how to develop and maintain sustainable landscapes that impact the environment as little as possible. Valuable natural resources are put at risk everyday based upon the decisions made in the landscape. It has been documented that certain landscaping practices contribute to many different forms of air, noise and water pollution. The FYN program is working to change behavior by teaching alternative forms of design and maintenance practices to create and sustain a landscape that is more ecologically in step with the surrounding environment.

Information and education alone will not influence most participants to change behaviors learned over a long period of time. The key to success for FYN is to conceive and nurture the sense of responsibility that people must have for the protection of their natural resources. Participants will usually not change their behavior, even with incentives, if they do not feel personally involved, responsible, or attached in some way.

The scientific backbone of the FYN program is its nine principles (*Right Plant/Right Place, Water Efficiently, Fertilize Appropriately, Mulch, Control Yard Pests Responsibly, Recycle, Reduce Stormwater Runoff, Attract Wildlife* and *Protect the Waterfront*), and their related actions and/or activities that participants can incorporate to develop a more sustainable landscape.

These activities can reduce the impact of the landscape on the environment and reduce non-point source pollution from stormwater and irrigation water runoff. The FYN program partners with several county departments and other agencies and institutions, and supports county regulations and permits (see chart on page 2). In fact, both the Landscape Water Conservation Ordinance and the new Fertilizer Ordinance refer to ELM/FYN principles.

Florida Yards & Neighborhoods



II. Accomplishments

A. 2007 Accomplishments

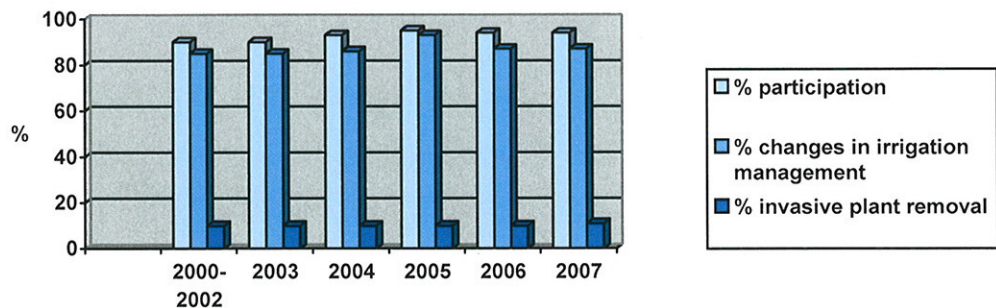
The FYN program seeks commitment from participants through actively involving the target group, through site visits and presentations, by conceiving and nurturing the sense of responsibility that people have for the protection of natural resources. Participants at site visits are interviewed after one year. Those present at presentations receive an evaluation form, and both groups receive quarterly newsletters and follow-up educational programs for reinforcement.

The 2007 audit of the 334 community associations receiving site visits in the first six years of the program revealed that 94 percent reported that they have made some positive changes and that they make better plant choices when making landscape changes. In addition, many of the community associations that received presentations made changes.

Of the 94 percent that made changes:

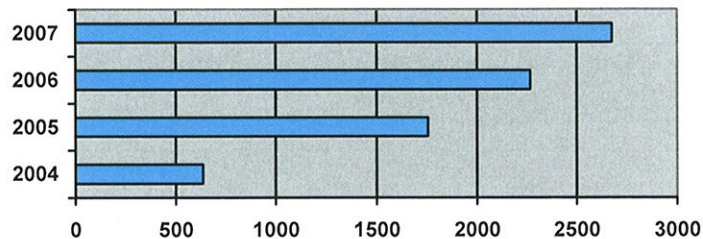
- 87 percent reported changes to irrigation system management such as adjusting irrigation systems seasonally, calibrating irrigation system, capping irrigation heads in areas with mature xeric plants and installing or expanding micro-irrigation components.
- 11 percent reported removing invasive plants and/or restoring natural areas or stormwater retention areas.

Participation and Changes Made by Participants



Of the 2674 attendees at educational programs during 2007, 99 percent indicated on evaluation forms that they intend to make changes in their landscape practices. The knowledge gain was rated as 35 percent.

Program Attendance



Of the 88 homeowners who received on-site programs in 2007, 74 (84 percent) were awarded the *Florida-friendly Yard Recognition* sign, indicating that the FYN nine principles are incorporated in yard design and maintenance.

B. 2007 Contacts

- **70 new contacts with Community Associations developed.** Of the 70 contacts, 47 associations received site visits and pre-implementation surveys and 23 homeowners associations received presentations.
- **42 previously contacted Community Associations received repeat site visits.**
- **7 new contacts with related businesses developed.** These businesses include management companies, landscape maintenance companies and other associated professionals.
- **18 volunteers (Master Gardener Yard Advisors) recruited and trained.**
- **Environmental Horticulture / Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Advisory Committee established:**

County Commissioner	SC Environmental Services representative
SWFWMD representative	SC Natural Resources representative
SBEP representative	USDA NRCS representative
Aquatic industry representative	Landscape industry representative
Community managers (2)	Community Assoc. representatives (3)
Yard Advisor representative	Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent.

C. Major accomplishments during the six years of this program:

- **533 Associations contacted.** Each received informal (on-site outreach) or formal (classroom style) educational programs. All contacts receive newsletters and other educational materials.
- **147 related businesses, such as management companies and landscape maintenance companies, contacted.** Familiarizing these companies with FYN principles contributes to changes made by participants.
- **Thirty newspaper or newsletter articles** with a combined media exposure of over 2,023,700.
- **Five television news reports or features** with a combined media exposure of over 433,680.
- **188 TV airings** of *FYN Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* DVDs on Access 19 and the Sarasota County Education Channel with media exposure per airing of 147,814.
- **The program received the 2003 Achievement Award from the National Association of Counties (NACo)** in the environmental protection and energy category for creating and implementing an innovative program.
- **Observed water savings** of four Condominium and Homeowners Associations visited during the length of the program:
 - Approximately 21,400,000 gallons yearly.
 - Total acreage of these associations is approximately 54.5.
 - Water saved per acre approximately 390,000 gallons.
- It is extremely difficult to measure the impacts of this program. Although a community might be incorporating FYN principles, to date, there is no accurate way to document the reduction of impact. However, **potential future water savings** of the 533 associations visited (total acreage approximately 8,430) during the length of the program based on 90% participation ($8,430 \times 0.9 = 7,587$ acres \times 390,000 gallon / acre \times 50%): 1,479,465,000 gallons yearly, conservatively.

D. Program Enhancements through Partnerships:

- Sarasota County Utilities Department from the Environmental Services Business Center provided \$25,000 to general funds in support of the Community Associations program.
- Sarasota Bay Estuary Program (SBEP) provided \$10,000 for supporting materials, such as the *Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida*, the *FYN Nine Landscape Principles* and *Creating Your Florida Yard* DVDs, and *The Community Landscape: An Environmental Approach* (a publication for community associations that gives recommendations on selecting a landscape maintenance contractor and contract specifications, which will be distributed in February 2008).
- The Community Associations Institute (CAI) provided \$400.00 in-kind donation (booth for April 2007 CA Day, a Trade Show organized by CAI).
- The City of Sarasota provided \$100.00 in-kind donation (booth for May 2007 Neighborhood Conference).
- Palmer Ranch Community provided \$150 in-kind donation (booth for March Spring Fest).
- Master Gardener Yard Advisors provided 800 volunteer hours @ 17.55 /hr (National Points of Lights Foundation) = \$ 14,040.00.

III. Activities

A. Educational Programs and Community Events:

- **268 educational programs** conducted to **2,674 attendees** through informal (on-site outreach) and formal (classroom style) programs to community associations, associated professionals, and homeowners. These programs include:
 - **On-site Outreach Programs to Community Associations (89 programs).**
 - **Community and Civic Series (23 classes):** *Florida-friendly Landscaping (15x), Snakes, Coastal Native Plants, Attract Wildlife, Recycle, Protect the Waterfront, Hurricanes vs. Trees and Grounds Maintenance for Community Associations.*
 - **Adult and Community Center Series and Master Gardener Training (5 classes):** *Environmental Landscape Management (ELM) and Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) "Right Plant, Right Place, Water Efficiently, Fertilize Appropriately and Palms in the Landscape.*
 - **Continuing Education Unit (CEU) classes for the Community Association Management (CAM) license (4 classes):** *Hurricanes vs. Trees, Turf Alternatives, Tree Selection, Maintenance and Local Ordinances and Invasive Plants: Identification and Control.*
 - **Continuing Education Unit (CEU) classes for International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) arborist license (1 class):** *Trees at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens.*
 - **Mangrove Management Programs coordinated with UF/IFAS Manatee County Extension and Sarasota County Resource Protection (2 programs):** *The Importance of the Mangrove Habitat, Protecting Our Community's Mangrove Resources, Licenses and Herbicides for Controlling Invasive Plants in Mangrove Areas and Pruning for Mangrove and Shoreline Health.*" CEUs provided to ISA arborists.
 - **FYN Neighborhood Grant Workshops (5):** *Creating Your Florida Yard.*

- **Shamrock Park, Twin Lakes, and Florida House Series (8 classes):** *Landscaping for Butterflies, Florida-friendly Landscaping, How to Create a Florida-friendly Landscape, Hurricanes vs. Trees, After the Storm: Caring for Storm Damaged Trees, Coastal Native Plants, Right Plant/Right Place and Fertilize Appropriately.*
- **Step-by-Step Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Training (23 classes, team-teaching with Master Gardener Yard Advisors)**
- **On-site Outreach Programs for Homeowners (88 programs, conducted by Master Gardener Yard Advisors).**
- **FYN Nine Landscape Principles DVD presentations at Gulf Gate, Fruitville, Venice and North Port Libraries (15 programs, conducted by Master Gardener Yard Advisors).**
- **FYN Workshops at Watershed Awareness Festival (5, conducted by Master Gardener Yard Advisors):** *FYN Nine Landscape Principles DVD presentation (3x), Rain Barrel Workshop and Composting Workshop.*
- **555 attendees (one-on-one contact) at 5 Community Events:** *Palmer Ranch Spring Fest; CA Day (Trade Show and Educational Expo organized by the Community Associations Institute); Neighborhoods – Spirit of America (2007 Florida Neighborhoods Conference); Kensington Park Neighborhood Event and the Master Gardener Plant Sale.*

B. Media and Publications:

- **Media**
 - **FYN Nine Landscape Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs:**
 - 188 airings on Access 19 and the Sarasota County Education Channel. Media exposure per airing: 147,814.
 - **Four issues of Palm Prints**, the quarterly newsletter for Community Associations and Associated Professionals. Media exposure per issue: 700.
 - **Water Efficiently and Managing Your Landscape During Drought: the West Florida Wire**, newsletter of the Community Associations Institute. Media exposure per issue: 1,000.
 - **Managing Your Landscape During Drought**, interview and podcast with Harold Bubil for SNN 6. Media exposure: approximately 106,680 and
 - **Rain Barrels**, radio interview with Emily Berno for WLRS Truly Sustainable Sarasota. Media Exposure: unknown
 - **Living Florida-friendly:** North Port / Englewood Sun-Herald / Venice Gondolier. Media exposure: 80,000.
 - **Florida-friendly Yards Catch On, What You Want in a Landscape: Good Sense and Presentation Demystefies(sic) the Snakes of Florida:** Sarasota Herald Tribune. Media exposure per issue: 106,680.
 - **The South Venice Beachwave** publishes information on the **Shamrock Educational Programs** monthly
 - **The Herald Tribune (Home and Garden Calendar) and Pelican Press (Community Events)** regularly post educational programs.
 - **Homeowners Associations** are reprinting articles from “Palm Prints” for their internal newsletters.
- **Publications**
 - **Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida:** with Bruce Holst (Marie Selby Botanical Gardens).

- ***FYN Nine Landscape Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs:***
Added to permanent collections of all nine Sarasota County libraries.
- ***The Community Landscape: an Environmental Approach*** (to be distributed in February 2008): with Don Rainey and Fred Santana from Sarasota County Extension, and Peggy Dessaint from Manatee County Extension.
- ***Mangrove Appreciation*** abstract for 2007 Extension Professionals Association of Florida (EPAF) Conference

C. Highlights of the past twelve months:

Collaborative Efforts

- **Sarasota County Water Resources:** Data to support NPDES and SWFWMD permits shared, and promotional materials such as the *Water Conservation Calendar* reviewed.
- **Sarasota County Resource Protection:** Working partnerships continue to be maintained. A very successful Mangrove Seminar was conducted for 82 professionals. This partnership has led to better understanding and maintenance of preserve areas and stormwater retention areas throughout the County.
- **Sarasota County Neighborhoods Grant Program:** FYN Workshops provided to prospective applicants and grant applications were reviewed to assure that landscape plans adhered to FYN principles.
- **Sarasota County Parks (Community Services), Shamrock Park:** Educational programs provided for community associations and the South Venice Neighborhood.
- **Sarasota County Libraries:** Educational programs were provided at Gulf Gate, Fruitville, Venice and North Port libraries.
- **Sarasota Bay Estuary Program:** *FYN Nine Landscapes Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs* and *The Community Landscape: an Environmental Approach* developed in partnership with this organization.
- **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens and Sarasota Bay Estuary Program:** The *Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida* was developed in partnership with these organizations. This publication is also made available to educators at Parks, Resource Protection, and Natural Resources departments.

Multi County Efforts

- **Manatee County Extension:** Collaboration on programs for community managers, arborists and other landscape professionals (such as Mangrove seminar), and development of educational materials (*The Community Landscape: An Environmental Approach*).
- **Manatee and Charlotte County Extension:** Educational materials such as the *FYN Nine Landscapes Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs* are shared.
- **Hillsborough/Polk and Pinellas/Pasco County Extension:** The coordinators of the FYN Community Association programs in these counties (modeled after the Sarasota program) are supported and resources shared.

State Collaboration

- **State FYN and SWFWMD:** Educational materials such as the *FYN Nine Landscapes Principles and Creating Your Florida Yard DVDs* are made available state wide, and links to electronic copies of the *Guide to the Mangroves of Florida* and the *Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida* are provided.
- **Extension Professional Associations of Florida (EPAF):** Abstract about the success of the Mangrove Seminars, *Mangrove Appreciation* presented.

Professional Outreach

- **Community Associations Institute (CAI) board member and education chair:** This relationship has resulted in the development of Continuing Education Unit (CEU) classes for managers for the Community Association Management (CAM) license. The evaluation of the first class revealed that the attending managers control over 6,200 acres!
- **Professional Community Managers Association (PCMA) and Building Managers International (BMI):** Relationships established, and CEU classes for the Community Association Management (CAM) license are now also presented to managers associated with these organizations.
- **Association of Green Realtors:** Link to FYN web pages and materials provided.
- **Working relationships developed with landscape maintenance companies.** These companies refer many of their clients and this not only has immediate impact but will have lasting implications by reducing water demand and fostering better understanding of environmental landscape management practices.

Professional Awards and Recognitions

- **UF/IFAS Gold Image Awards:** for the *Guide to the Mangroves of Florida* and the *Guide to the Common Epiphytes of Florida*.
- **Community Associations Institute (CAI):** *Recognition for Valuable Services and Dedication to the West Florida Chapter of the Community Associations Institute.*

Positive Feedback (selection)

- **Chuck Butterfield, Pelican Cove:** "Thank you for all the advice you gave us at Pelican Cove and hope we can continue to learn from you."
- **Bruce Dayton, Jacaranda West, on Step-by-Step FYN classes:** "It would be great if all homeowners' associations had at least one member with this kind of training so that boards of directors could use them to promote Florida Friendly Yards and Best Management Practices."
- **Diane Graham, Fairway Woods:** "Your power point lecture on 'Selecting a Landscape Contractor' has been an invaluable help to the Landscape Committee...it will help the Board to better understand the management of the condominium grounds."
- **Mike Angers, Community Associations Institute (CAI) to Sarasota County BCC:** "We highly value the relationship we have developed with the UF/IFAS Sarasota Extension Service and especially Annemarie Post...who provides educational programs for managers and community associations."
- **Darlene Cross, Community Manager (Argus):** "We at Argus and Botanica Community Association would like to thank you for reviewing the Landscape Program...Your help has been valuable to all concerned."
- **Gwen Wilson, New College Foundation:** "I thank you for your contribution to yesterday's planning session. You bring vast expertise to the table...Your input was both most welcome and valuable."
- **Peggy Parillo, North Port Utilities:** "thank you for the wonderful presentation (Drinking Water Week) on Florida Yards & Neighborhoods. It was very informative and the attendees enjoyed it very much. The (FYN Nine Landscape Principles) video was terrific"!
- **Shannon Staub, SC Commissioner:** "Anne Marie (sic) is one of best assets...always does a great job. Has convinced so many condo assn, homeowner assn to save water

(and thus, money) it is incredible. If I could clone her I would have her visiting businesses to get better landscaping.”

- **Sydney Park Brown, UF/IFAS Hillsborough County Extension:** “It is to her credit that SWFWMD instituted two new homeowner/condo-associations positions in the Tampa Bay area.”
- **Doris Heitzman, UF/IFAS Pinellas County Extension:** “Thank you also for your input and continuing support... Your reinforcement and guidance on the development of my program ...are invaluable and truly helpful to me.”

IV. 2008 Work Plan

- Prioritize activities with help from Advisory Committee
- Establish GIS Database to identify un-served areas for future targets
- Explore the possibility of starting a “Junior FYN Program and 4H Club”
- Explore funding sources for a program assistant for FYN Residential program and supporting educational materials.
- Continue regular program activities