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Public Engagement Day at UMM

Summary: The West Central Research and Outreach Center is just one of the places that will be featured as an example of public engagement efforts between UMM and the greater Morris community during UMM's Public Engagement Day Friday, April 4.

(March 31, 2008)-Although the West Central Research and Outreach Center (WCROC) in Morris began as an agricultural experiment station, the work of the Center has expanded to include environmental issues and renewable energy in addition to their research and outreach activities.

The WCROC is part of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences on the St. Paul campus of the University of Minnesota. However, the WCROC's close proximity to the University's Morris campus (UMM) makes it a perfect partner for engagement with UMM and the broader agricultural community.

"Our approach to public engagement encompasses broad elements including educational events and roundtable discussions on current and future initiatives," said Jerry Wright, interim head of the WCROC.

The WCROC is just one of the places that will be featured as an example of public engagement efforts between UMM and the greater Morris community. These activities will be highlighted on Friday, April 4, as part of UMM's Public Engagement Day.

Andrew Furco, associate vice president for public engagement, will be a part of the celebration. Furco began his work at the University of Minnesota on January 2, 2008, and is making a point of visiting each University campus to learn first hand about their engagement activities.

"Each campus has a very important role and important responsibility, but each campus is unique and will have specific needs," Furco said in an interview with the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus News Service. "My job is to work with each one to ensure that it can be successful in all aspects of its engagement efforts," he added.

To highlight some of the many engagement activities the public is invited to three concurrent open houses all held from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Friday, April 4.

The three Morris locations that will be featured are:

- Legacy Living, 108 E 6th St
- Prairie Renaissance Cultural Alliance, 603 Atlantic Ave
- West Central Research and Outreach Center, 46352 State Highway 329

Staff will be on hand at each location to speak with visitors and explain the connections between the University and their organization. Posters of other engagement projects will be on display.

At 12:45 p.m., guests are invited to a Public Engagement Day local foods lunch in the Food Service Building at UMM. Furco will be the featured speaker. Space is limited so those who are interested in attending the lunch are encouraged to RSVP to Jessica Beyer of The Center for Small Towns at jbeyer@morris.umn.edu.

Public Engagement Day is intentionally scheduled to coincide with both the Undergraduate Research Symposium at UMM on April 4 and the 30th annual UMM Jazz Fest, April 3-5, two longstanding UMM events that also demonstrate the high level of engagement by UMM students.

The April 4 event at UMM is a pre-event to the larger University of Minnesota Public Engagement Day that will take place on Tuesday, April 22, in Coffman Memorial Union on the Twin Cities campus.

Dr. Engin Sungur, UMM professor of statistics, will participate in a panel discussion about research perspectives and community influences during the Twin Cities event. Other representatives from UMM will also present a workshop about the way students and communities can get involved with engagement activities with the University.

UMM's Public Engagement Day is hosted by the University of Minnesota, Morris in partnership with the University of Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center, Extension, and the West Central Regional Sustainable Development Partnership. Activities are funded in part by the U of M's Office of Public Engagement.

For more information about any of the activities related to Public Engagement Day, contact [Jessica Beyer](#) or call (320) 589-6451.

Photo: Andrew Furco

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.