

## Late 2010 and 2011 Activity

In light of our ever changing social-economic climate, the Southwest ITBEC Board held a goal setting session this past year designed to re-examine the Board's Strategic Plan and chart the future direction of the Southwest ITBEC. The session was facilitated by UW Extension - La Cross Community, Natural Resource & Economic Development Agent Karl Green.

The SW ITBEC Board reaffirmed their role to act as an umbrella organization in the region to foster collaboration to stimulate and promote economic growth. Working partnerships continued between the Southwest ITBEC and regional organizations including the 7 Rivers Alliance, Wisconsin Rural Partners and Hidden Valleys.

Building off the successes of the energy themed conferences held in 2009 and 2010, the Southwest ITBEC Board is planning a 3rd one-day conference focusing on healthy foods and the resulting healthy bodies. The seminar will be held on October 5, 2011 in Vernon County.

In addition:

> The Southwest ITBEC is partnering with the Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. for support of the Regional Rural Forum and Statewide Rural Summit series. The three Regional Rural Forums will be half-day events. The Statewide Rural Summit will be a full-day event. The theme for the series will be "Let Your Voice Be Heard". One of the 3 Regional Rural Forums will be held in October in Tomah.

The objective of the Summit Series is to gather rural issues by facilitating 3 Regional Rural Forum events at various locations across rural Wisconsin. These 3 structured regional events that will focus on obtaining citizen participation, as well as input from local government, schools, economic development councils, chambers of commerce, area businesses and organizations, UW-Extension, WEDA and others. These will be "input" events, with participants identifying what they perceive as local issues, challenges and priorities. Input from these 3 regional forums will feed into a Statewide Rural Summit which will be used as a process to define and share solutions to address rural problems. Results from the Regional Summits will be pooled and the emerging themes identified. The purpose of the Statewide Rural Summit will be to set an action agenda for Wisconsin.

> The Southwest ITBEC undertook a major makeover of its web site, [www.southwestwisconsin.com](http://www.southwestwisconsin.com) this past year. The web site acts as a portal to the region and helps direct people to local government web sites, economic development organizational web sites and tourism related web sites.

> The Southwest ITBEC has partnered with local chapters of 40&8 to provide nursing scholarship. The 40&8 was founded in 1920 by American veterans returning from France. Originally an arm of The American Legion, the 40&8 became an independent and separately incorporated veteran's organization in 1960. The 40&8 is committed to charitable and patriotic aims. Their purpose is to uphold and defend the United States Constitution, to promote the well being of veterans and their widows and orphans, and to actively participate in selected charitable endeavors, which include programs that promote child welfare and nurses training. Two \$500 scholarships were jointly awarded to Juneau County high school graduates in 2011.

> The Southwest ITBEC joined the Wisconsin Agriculture Tourism Association in 2011. The Wisconsin Agriculture Tourism Association promotes and preserves the rural lifestyle, fosters partnership opportunities within the ag-tourism community, and provides tools which encourage sustainable economic growth while creating awareness of Wisconsin agriculture.

> Cash match funds from the Southwest ITBEC assisted the Vernon Economic Development Association with the renovation of the former NCR building in Viroqua. The ITBEC cash match was used to leverage additional funding to perform "blight elimination" in the building in advance of new tenants moving in. Currently, only 30,000 square feet of the original 100,000 square foot area is unoccupied.