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New book highlights Wisconsin's vibrant rural areas

Contact: Jerry Hembd, 715-394-8208, jhembd@uwsuper.edu

Superior, Wis.— For many people, rural life conjures up the image of gently rolling hills, farmland and sleepy small towns. But a new book reveals that in Wisconsin, the countryside offers fertile ground for visionary ideas and cutting-edge innovations.

Renewing the Countryside—Wisconsin, produced through a partnership among the University of Wisconsin-Extension and the UW-Superior, the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) and Renewing the Countryside, a non-profit organization, tells the stories of 39 people, organizations and businesses that are leading the nation in forward-looking, sustainable solutions to the challenges facing today's rural economy and communities.

The book provides firsthand accounts of people who are revitalizing farming, community life, tourism, the arts, culture, conservation and education. *Renewing the Countryside—Wisconsin* illustrates what Governor Jim Doyle writes in the book is nothing less than “a rural renaissance.”

Renewing the Countryside—Wisconsin demonstrates that people who adopt environmentally friendly and community-oriented approaches are able to earn a living by doing so. “We wanted to feature stories where people were making a living at what they loved doing—not simply doing it as a hobby,” says Jerry Hembd, the book's co-editor and director of the Northern Center for Community and Economic Development..

Renewing the Countryside—Wisconsin shows the basic connection between country residents and their urban counterparts. “The activities going on in rural areas really complement what's happening in our towns and cities,” says Hembd.

For example, local farmers are the source of popular urban farmers' markets that have also become social and cultural events. The arts and recreation are another link as smaller communities attract city-dwellers for art tours and concerts, and enterprising business owners offer lodging and activities for people who come to enjoy Wisconsin's outdoor recreation.

Hembd and fellow editors Jody Padgham, education director for MOSES, and Jan Joannides, executive director and co-founder of the Renewing the Countryside organization, wanted to convey that wise stewardship of resources

and appreciation of values born in the state's past also provide a vision for its future—economically and culturally.

Distributed by the University of Wisconsin Press, the book includes many color photographs that focus on Wisconsin's innovative people and interesting places.

To find out more about *Renewing the Countryside—Wisconsin* (including how to order) and *Renewing the Countryside*, a Minneapolis-based non-profit organization that champions innovative rural entrepreneurs and organizations, visit www.renewingthecountryside.org.

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