

First time Wisconsin is awarded a SET Grant and Juneau County is one of the three County Regional Teams selected

BY KAREN EGGLESTON

The 7 Rivers Alliance applied for a SET Grant (Stronger Economies Together) and is pleased to announce they were awarded a SET Grant. Three counties were chosen as the regional team; Juneau, Jackson and Monroe in Wisconsin. This is the only SET Grant to be awarded in the mid-west and one of only 7 awarded across the U.S. This is the first time Wisconsin has been an awardee.

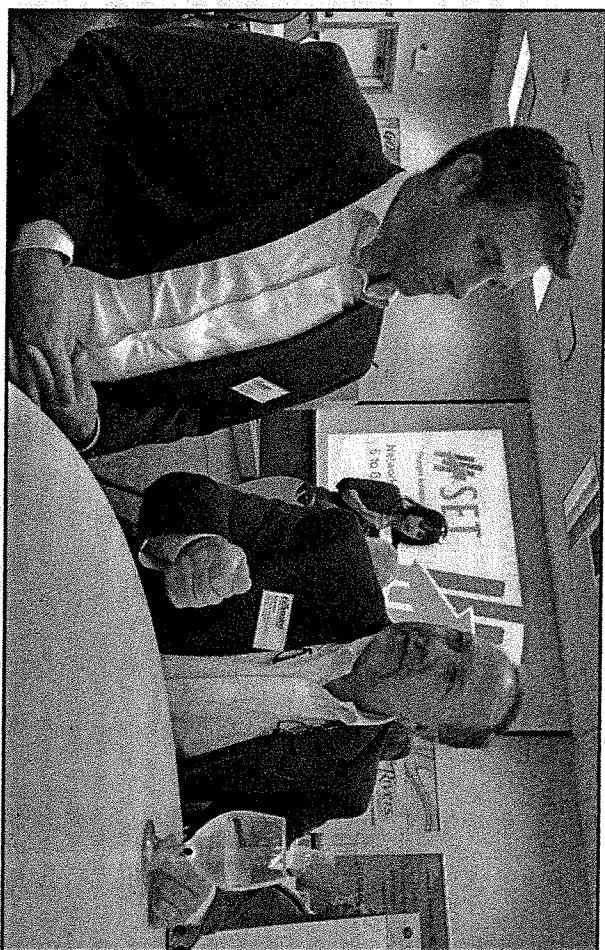
Lisa Herr, 7 Rivers Alliance, Executive Director and Jennifer Kuderer, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) started the process in April 2016. The SET Grant is through the USDA Rural Development Program in conjunction with the U-W Extension Office. The initiative was launched in 2010 by the USDA Rural Development Corporation. SET is used to strategically strengthen the ability of counties in rural America to come together and work at developing and implementing an economic devel-

opment blueprint that builds on current and emerging strengths.

Herr and Kuderer worked with the U-W Extension Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission and the WEDC to collect data and apply for the program. Herr told The Messenger, "We are very excited about this opportunity and being selected."

The SET Civic Forum was held at the Cranberry Lodge in Tomah on September 27 to announce the awarding of the SET Grant to Juneau, Jackson and Monroe Counties. Approximately 90 business and community leaders from the three counties attended the forum, including four from The Messenger of Juneau County. There were nine vendors present serving food and beverages. Representing Juneau County as vendors were Wisconsin River Meats and Burr Oak Winery.

The plan will be carried out by the USDA Rural Development, University of Wisconsin Extension, 7 Rivers Alliance and a local team



Matt Kures and Greg Wise of the University of Wisconsin Extension explaining the SET Grant to members of The Messenger of Juneau County prior to the start of the Civic Forum, September 27 at The Cranberry Lodge in Tomah.

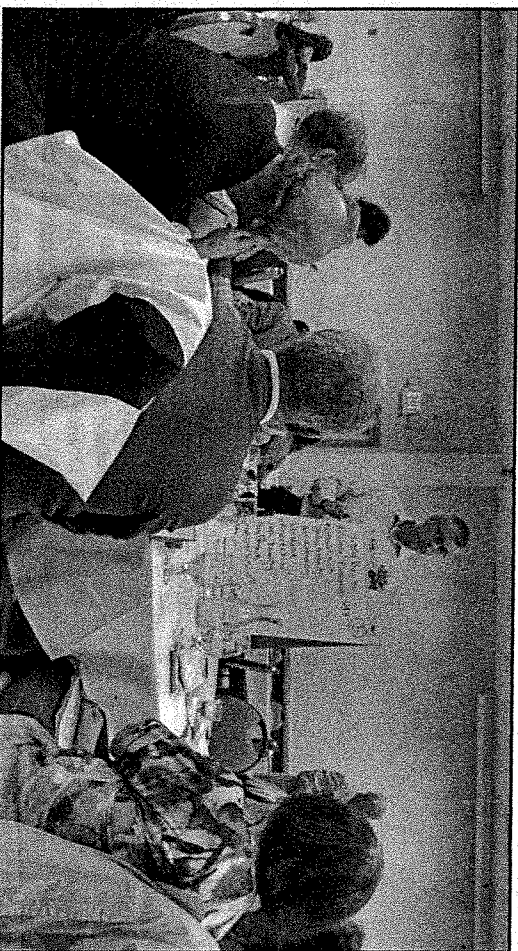
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that include: Chris Hardie, Executive Director of Black River Falls Chamber of Commerce; Terry Whipple, Executive Director of Juneau County Economic Development Corporation; Steve Peterson, Coordinator for Monroe County Economic Development; Jenny Kuderer, Regional Program Director, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation; Greg Flogstad, Executive Director of the Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission and Lisa Herr, Executive Director, 7 Rivers Alliance.

Step by step coaching and technical assis-

tance will be provided by State Resource Teams and will include resources and talent from state and federal agencies to design and implement a viable regional economic development plan using data tailored to Juneau, Jackson and Monroe Counties. Information used to tailor the data includes detailed demographic and socio-economic data, comparative economic advantages and descriptions of it current and emerging clusters.

Future Civic Forums will be held in neighboring counties. For further information: www.7riversalliance.org/Advisor.



Participants at the SET Civic Forum discussing the strengths and challenges of the 7 Rivers Alliance Region composed of Juneau, Jackson and Monroe Counties.

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