

# Program stretches comfort zone

CONTRIBUTED BY SAMUEL SPOTTS

A blind folded group of citizens walk across State Street in Mauston on a cold winter day. They are led to the Beyond the Daily Grind Café where they sit down and are served their lunches. Still blind folded, they proceed to eat lunch, cautiously feeling the table for their soups and sandwiches.

As I sit at the table with my fellow classmates I can't help but listen to the sound of them eating. Some of them lip smacking some delicious squash soup, others slowly sipping their coffee or water, bits and pieces of conversations from across the room whispering to their friends, "What are they doing over there?" "What's up with

those blind folds?" There is one woman however that doesn't have a blind fold on because she is legally sight-impaired. Her name is Lori, and she explains to me, "Although this is just a taste of what it is like to be sight impaired, this exercise is a great way for people to experience how adaptable we all are, and that can be an enlightening feeling."

The UW Extension Advanced Leadership Program (ALP) is designed to give participants a deeper level of connectivity within our communities in Juneau County, or in the words of the program Director, Gary Kirking to, "stretch your comfort zone." ALP helps participants develop and/or strengthen lead-

ership skills, such as communication, team building, facilitating change, group problem solving, building consensus, group dynamics and organizational skills.

The intention of the program is building leadership which in turn builds community. Some benefits include: Participants receive a heightened awareness of county issues, increase their networking opportunities and become leadership resources for the community.

Now, more than ever it's important to take the time to walk in someone else's shoes, feel what they feel, look to your community for support and support your community, and stretch your comfort zone.

If you have any questions or



CONTRIBUTED BY SAMUEL SPOTTS

inquiries regarding the ALP Program contact Gary Kirking at the Juneau County Extension Office at 608-847-9329.