

Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program University of Wisconsin-Extension



The Center for South Asia was proud to collaborate with the Wisconsin Rural Leadership Program in a two-week seminar program for a group of 45 Wisconsin leaders to India. Rachel Weiss, Outreach Specialist, served as the programs' co-chair, and assisted in the design and implementation of the program.

Over 23 years ago, WRLP embarked on their vision - to develop leaders to strengthen communities. The goal of the innovative Wisconsin Rural leadership Program is to strengthen communities by preparing leaders as a catalyst to effectively deal with today's changing world. WRLP is a two-year, intensive leadership development program designed for individuals from all over the state that have already exhibited leadership capacity and are ready for the next level of their development. WRLP is the only statewide leadership development program in Wisconsin.

In 2003 WRLP was recognized by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation as one of the exemplary leadership programs in the nation. Now, all across the state, past and present WRLP fellows are serving in leadership positions, acting as community stalwarts and as beacons for new endeavors. WRLP has a very proud history of graduating some of Wisconsin's finest leaders. To learn more about WRLP, go to: www.uwex.edu/ces/wrlp.

Every other year the State of Wisconsin selects up to 35 emerging leaders. The program includes eight 3-day seminars held in various locations throughout Wisconsin, a one-week national travel seminar to Washington, DC, a one-week regional seminar some place other than Wisconsin, and a two-week international seminar near the end of the two-year program. The current group of leaders traveled to India for a two-week program in January.

The objectives of the seminar were:

- To gain new perspective on major issues facing Indian society and to better understand its economic, political, cultural, and social structure within local, state, regional, national, and global context.
- To better understand India's economic, political, cultural, and social systems as their impact on such things as education, economic development, health care, natural resource

management and leadership development within local, state, regional, national, and global context.

- To meet people from India so that the participants can better understand similarities and differences between people of different cultures and systems.
- To gain a better appreciation of the difficulties and possibilities of solving social problems in different arenas within the context of the Indian economics, politics, and education.

In Delhi the group attended seminars at the **American Center** on US-India Relations; at **American Institute of Indian Studies** on Communal Violence, Economic Liberalization, and Urban Planning; at **Jawaharlal Nehru University** on India's Voting, State and National Power, and Role of Government in issues of Class, Gender and Caste; and at **Gandhi Peace Foundation** on the Life and Legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. In Bangalore, the **Covenant Centre for Development**, a non-governmental organization designed a program to introduce the participants to the concept of "social responsibility." The group visited **Honeywell technology Solution Lab** and several programs which are sponsored by their company: the **Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Tradition**, **Maya Organic India**, and **ATREE**. The **Center for Experiencing Socio-Cultural Interaction** helped to organize the program in Madurai, where the group was divided to explore issues related to: Agriculture, Health Care, Human Rights, and Education. Each group also had the opportunity to visit different villages, and interact with women's groups and the local panchayat leaders. In Mahabalipuram, the group visited **DakshinaChitra** and was exposed to the world of arts and culture of South India.

