



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
PORTAGE COUNTY



# ANNUAL **REPORT** 2019



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# ***EXTENSION:***

## **CHANGING LIVES & COMMUNITIES**

For a century, Extension has come to represent the Wisconsin Idea – expanding university knowledge to every person in the state. As a Division of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension expands the University’s outreach. Extension epitomizes the Wisconsin Idea, delivering programming across the state to create solutions. Extension also partners with business and government leaders, community groups, and agriculture, natural resources, and youth and family development professionals to collaborate on research opportunities.

Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs—on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. Extension has a measurable impact – changing lives and communities through:

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### **Supporting Wisconsin’s Agriculture Industry »**

Whether on the farm or in the field, we’re on the front lines of modern agriculture, building stronger, more productive food systems and agricultural products. From animal management to crops and soils to financial planning, our educators and researchers help solve challenges that Wisconsin producers face.

### **Fostering Leadership and Civic Engagement »**

From educating elected officials to training the next generation of local leaders, we’re committed to empowering citizens to make positive, transformative change in their communities.

### **Empowering Families and Communities »**

We provide individuals and families with the tools and guidance they need to adopt positive health behaviors. Our programming focuses on nutrition, food security, food safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health, substance abuse and health insurance literacy.

### **Promoting Aging-Friendly Communities »**

We embrace the philosophy that each stage of life is unique, exciting and filled with potential. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness into everyday use.

### **Enhancing Resilient Natural Resource Systems »**

We work with partners across the state to ensure that our diverse natural resources remain resilient and productive. From water and forestry programming to conservation training and youth environmental education, our educators and researchers navigate complex issues, facilitate challenging conversations, and help develop innovative solutions.

### **Supporting Positive Youth Development »**

Our research-based youth enrichment programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to grow into the global leaders of tomorrow. From youth governance to Wisconsin 4-H clubs, we provide diverse educational opportunities to prepare youth for success in Wisconsin and beyond.



## Soil and Water Quality Improvement on a Watershed Scale

**Situation Statement:** County residents identified, maintaining productive agricultural regions and protection of the county's natural resources as priority issues (2017). There is a need for environmentally sustainable agricultural practices promoting integrated crop management advances and usage on farms.

### Farmers of Mill Creek Producer-Led Watershed Project 2019

**Focus:** Improving soil and water quality in the Mill Creek Watershed. I coordinate field days, provide educational content for field days, and provide one-on-one consulting for farmers interested in cover crops and no-till Planting.



In 2019, 24 farmers including 5 new cooperators installed conservation practices on their farms such as no-till planting, cover crops, waterway buffer strips or hosted an on-farm field demonstration. Conservation practices covered more than 1,784 acres. Field days and lunch and learns attracted approximately 125 area farmers, and local residents, and 50 agriculture students from 3 area high schools to learn about conservation practices that will ensure clean water and healthy soils for future generations.

\$32,830 in cost-share funds were provided to farmers as part of this project from a Wisconsin DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant.

### Farmers for Tomorrow/Waupaca River Producer-Led Watershed Project 2019

**Focus:** Reducing nitrates entering groundwater In the Tomorrow/Waupaca River Watershed.

In 2019, 18 farmers including 6 new cooperators installed conservation practices on their farms such as no-till planting, cover crop planting, or hosted an on-farm research project site looking at nitrogen rates and corn grain yields.



# Agriculture

Conservation practices covered more than 2,086 acres. Meetings and field days attracted approximately 115 area farmers and local residents to learn about conservation practices that will ensure clean water and healthy soils for future generations.

\$37,540 in cost-share funds were provided to farmers as part of this project through a Wisconsin DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant.



## **Corn Nitrogen Research**

I manage one of 10 research sites around Wisconsin focused on adaptive nitrogen (N) management strategies for corn using on-farm research trials evaluating N fertilizer rate and timing. Goals: 1) improve farmers' understanding of on-farm N cycling so they can adapt and implement N management practices to improve economic and environmental sustainability; and 2) collect research data to be used to evaluate and refine current N management decision making tools. This project is on-going in 2020.

## **Hop Nitrogen Research**

Since 2017 I have been doing replicated research trials on nitrogen fertilizer rates applied to hop plants in Wisconsin to determine optimum rates for production and environmental protection. Trials were conducted on private hop farms in three locations in Wisconsin through a two-year USDA Value Added Grant. This study was expanded in 2019 to measure the travel of nitrogen through the soil profile. The project is on-going in 2020.

## **2019 Roadside Invasive Plant Management Workshop – Portage County July 23**

Invasive plants impact Wisconsin's economy, environment and human health. Roadsides are key areas where unwanted plants establish and spread.



Our office along with, UW-Madison, and 4-Control held a roadside invasive plant workshop training staff of municipalities managing vegetation on roadsides.

Fifty attendees learned how to: Identify Wild Parsnip and other common invasive plants, Utilize invasive plant management techniques, Map invasive plant populations, and Develop an invasive plant management plan. Program had classroom and field activities demonstrating approaches to management and provided resources to support efforts.



# Community Development

Nathan Sandwick, Community Development Educator

## “SolSmart” Training, Information, and Designation

Through a partnership enlisting guidance from the Midwest Renewable Energy Association (MREA), Portage County agreed to pursue SolSmart designation as a solar-friendly community where it is easy for residents and businesses to install solar energy systems. Goals are to improve solar market conditions and increase the efficiency of local processes related to solar development. I served as the point-of-contact between the SolSmart team and various county staff, town officials and others. I recruited participants for applicable trainings. I spoke with installers and local building inspectors to gather reliable information about permitting requirements; and I introduced them to resources such as a model solar PV inspection checklist. I met with town officials to present basic program information and discuss opportunities to improve energy security (while challenges dealing with power outages were still fresh in their minds). By creating content for a solar resource development page on the county’s website, I helped expand access to resources and helpful information for property owners and contractors. Combined with relevant community energy resource development efforts completed in previous years, these informative and educational activities contributed to Portage County’s SolSmart designation in 2019.



## Group Process Facilitation and Organizational Development

Assisting several local groups in 2019 with Organizational development, visioning, strategic planning or implementation efforts. Among these Efforts was series of facilitated discussions with Portage County’s Health Care Center Committee to support development of a work plan that would help the committee proceed to facilitate collaboration and take steps toward determining a lasting solution for the center’s services. Discussions aimed at clearly identifying a set of timely learning and planning activities, and I provided a written summary of proceedings for reference. This helped to clarify committee members’ shared sense of purpose, notions of success, key questions and issues, activities to address those issues, intended outcomes, and applicable resources.







# Community Development

I also helped support the launch of a **wellness-related coalitions network**. I collaborated with several local leaders at work promoting health and wellness to help convene a meeting among more people who lead wellness-related groups in Portage County. At an initial gathering I led discussion about social capital as an asset that enables the community to achieve results otherwise not achievable. I also facilitated discussion laying out the health and wellness issues that groups seek to address, and how; and what resources they offer to the community. The launch of this network is among a series of efforts stemming from the most recent Portage County LIFE Report, and advances one of the aims identified during a “Future Regions” session that occurred in 2019.

## Community revitalization

In 2019 I arranged for a community economic development specialist to lead a local discussion exploring strategies to generate more interest and activity in downtown Stevens Point. The specialist and two colleagues also agreed to help prepare a retail trade area analysis for the downtown (completed in 2020) which may spark more ideas for strategic investment.

## Co-Leading Extension’s Community Vitality and Placemaking Team (Signature Effort)

I helped grow the team and on-board new active members in 2019. I convened UW-Extension’s “Foundations of Community Placemaking” in-service where I also presented content on building community capacity, and a tool for clarifying key aspects of local placemaking efforts. I delivered presentations about the team’s approach to conducting design team visits in Wisconsin communities. I assisted one of the team’s specialists with helping CREATE Portage County lead a Creative Placemaking workshop in Stevens Point where visiting artists and arts administrators generated a host of downtown improvements ideas.





# Health & Well-Being

Kelly Hammond, FoodWise Coordinator

## Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives



FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We advance healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels.

## Who We Serve



229

Total Learners

36

Hispanic



149

Total Learners

339

Not Hispanic/Latino



■ American Indian or Alaska Native

■ Asian

■ Black or African American

■ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

■ White



385

Direct Educational  
Contacts

2416

Total contacts

## Program

## HIGHLIGHTS



Penny Schmitt leads a StrongBodies class at Junction City

- New program Coordinator, Kelly Hammond.
- Penny Schmitt celebrates 15 years as a Nutrition Educator.
- Expanded family programming with Yuck to Yum and family cooking classes.
- Reaching new audiences with Spanish interpretations at Grocery Store Tours, and new StrongBodies classes in Rosholt.
- Integrated work with community members including expanding access to FoodShare at farmers markets, Fruit and Vegetable prescription program and improved school breakfasts.

## ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In Portage County, FoodWise partners with The Portage County Health Department, WIC, CAP Services/Head Start, Children's Wisconsin, Ascension hospital system, The Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership, Portage County CAN Coalition, the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Stevens Point Area School District, the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point and many others to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.





# Health & Well-Being

## New Series: Kids in the Kitchen

When we ask what sort of experience those in our community are looking for— we always hear “family cooking classes.” In 2019, we decided to pilot a “Kids in the Kitchen” series of four lessons in partnership with CAP Services and FRAME Memorial Church using a new FoodWise curriculum, iCook. This interactive and engaging series create a safe space for families to try new things, connect as a family and learn how to make healthy, easy and affordable meals. Research and experience tells us that kids are more likely to try new foods when they made it themselves!

This series gave the FoodWise team the opportunity to share nutrition education, while providing tangible skills and recipes the whole family can enjoy.



*“I just wanted you to know how thankful I am for you teaching me and kids how to cook healthy and fast. We learned that fast food does not have to be unhealthy food. Now my kids can make better choices in the healthier food. My kids will now grow learning to take healthy choices”*  
- Juana, Mother of 4

## Expanding access to fresh, local fruits and vegetables for Portage County families.

As of an ongoing effort to address the barriers low-income residences in our community face when accessing fresh fruits and vegetables, the Portage County FoodWise team has been engaged with several coalitions, nonprofit groups and initiatives to connect the rich agricultural resources of Portage County, with those most need.

**Highlight: Over \$500 of fresh fruit and vegetable prescriptions were provided to families in need through the FVRx program in Portage County.**



One of the initiatives is to bring electronic bank transfer (EBT) of FoodShare dollars to the farmers market, which expand access to FoodShare participants, as well as bring in more business for area farmers. Another program is The Aspirus Fruit and Vegetable prescription program (FVRx) offers \$20 vouchers redeemable in fresh fruits and vegetables, which are currently redeemable at the Stevens Point Area CO-OP.



Families gather at the YMCA Giving Garden for the Family, Food and Fun Harvest Day in October 2019.

This program, in partnership with Children’s Wisconsin home visitation program, provided all families with a bag of produce donated from the Stevens Point farmers market gleaning program, which provides leftover food to food pantries and families in need.



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Learn more about our programs, upcoming classes and community partnerships

Follow us online!  
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**FOOD WISE**  
Healthy choices, healthy lives.

UW-MADISON EXTENSION

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# Human Development & Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Family Living Educator

## **Financial Wellness of Portage County (FWPC)**

Financial literacy levels are low throughout the community. Many community members do not know who to go to when they can't manage their bills, want to improve their credit scores, or when they want to save for something important.

Sherry Daniels, Family Living Educator, trained volunteer community members to be financial coaches for other community members who need financial coaching. In 2019 thirty-two individuals/families utilized this program.



At the end of 2019 Sherry sent an electronic survey out to participants in the program during the year. The survey asked FWPC participants what they learned from their coach and following are their statements. "How to look objectively to my budget, where to start with credit check, how to plan for the future." "I learned where I needed to cut back on some spending, how to set up a budget that I was comfortable with and also set money aside in case of an emergency." "Budgeting, how to plan and talk to child about finances." The survey also asked what they do differently after meeting with their coach and following are their statements. "I have way less anxiety about my financial situation and am more aware of what I spend." "I am more careful with my spending and have built up an emergency fund that I continue to add to." "Budgeting!" "Still watching what I spend. Working on paying off one credit card at a time, while staying above water. Redoing my budget monthly when new medical bills arrive."

Overall the community improves its financial literacy and is better able to thrive in the future.

## **Strong Bodies**

The Strong Bodies (Strong Women™) program offers a means to help people achieve better health and fitness through delivery of a national evidenced-based strength training program targeted to midlife and older women. While research shows that regular exercise provides many benefits to mature women, only 7% of middle-aged and older women exercise daily. Strong Bodies has been demonstrated to build strength, balance and flexibility, and helps to improve bone density and prevents falls.



# Human Development & Relationships

In 2019 Sherry worked with FoodWise and the ADRC to begin StrongBodies programs at sites in Amherst and Rosholt, along with an Advanced StrongBodies at the ADRC in Stevens Point. All sites that were started in previous years include Stevens Point, Plover, and Junction City. All six continued year-around classes throughout 2019. It was necessary to train more leaders in order to sustain the growth of this program, so seven more volunteer trainers completed the class.



At the end of 2019 participants were asked what is different since they began attending StrongBodies this is what they said: "Get up from the floor easier, legs are stronger, more strength in my arms." "Can do things much easier than before and I feel less tired." "My cholesterol has improved after the Strong Bodies Class." "I have more flexibility, strength and endurance to do daily activities!" As a result of this program, participants are more likely to be able to stay independent, in their homes longer, and continue to be active members of the community.

## Dollars During Development Program

Through the Dollars During Development program children learn about financial concepts appropriate for their age by reading books to them. Parents are encouraged to talk to their children about financial concepts and do activities with their children, suggestions are given in the parent guide that accompanies each book. I read to multiple classes in two Boys and Girls Clubs and at Headstart. These are very diverse groups which took three different books and parent guides home.





# Positive Youth Development

Connie Creighton, 4-H Educator

During 2019 the Portage County 4-H Youth Development program focused on supporting and empowering volunteers and youth leaders to develop their life skills through leadership opportunities and to Continue to expand outreach to underserved and protected audiences.



## Youth Life Skill Development

The 4-H Positive Youth Development program provides leadership and oversight for the Portage County 4-H program which involves 355 youth and 107 adult volunteers. These adult volunteers carry out the roles of club organizational leaders, project leaders, activity leaders and resource leaders to supplement the work of Extension professionals in providing educational opportunities for the 355 4-H youth volunteers enrolled as 4-H members throughout Portage County.

The typical 4-H adult volunteer contributes 68 hours a year valued at \$25.43 per hour in Wisconsin (from independentsector.org), that volunteer service is worth \$185,000 to Portage County. 4-H youth are also considered volunteers and each 4-H club has numerous community service projects that they engage in each year. The youth hours have not been included in these calculations; but if each youth spent a very conservative 5 hours a year that would add an additional 1,775 volunteer hours to the total.

4-H provides members with opportunities that connect them to their community. All of our thirteen 4-H Clubs participate in one or more community service projects a year like; highway clean-up, senior home visits, food pantry collection, educational workshops for youth, Salvation Army bell-ringing, participating in and Trick-or-treating for Operation Bootstrap, raking on Make a Difference Day, donating to various and creating supplies to programs like Empty Bowls and the Humane Society.







# Positive Youth Development

## Camping Programs engage youth K-13 in life skill development

Portage County has an intermediate and junior summer 4-H camp, a teen leadership winter 4-H camp, and a Cloverbud/Explorer day camp (grades K-3).



### **Summer Camps**

Summer Camp starts with training youth leaders to be camp counselors. Camp Counselor Training was held in April. Five county 4-H programs held summer camp together; Portage, Waupaca, Wood, Marathon, and Taylor County. 19 Teen Leaders were actively engaged in hands-on learning, including: learning new camp songs, learning ages and stages, and how to provide a safe environment for 73 campers.

### **Cloverbud/Explorer Day Camp (K-Grade 4)**

This a half day camp where youth can have a fun experience while engaged in a learning camp and make new friends without the added anxiety of an overnight trip. We recruited three 4-H teen leaders to be camp counselors and located the camp on the UW-Stevens Point Campus. The adventure started at the University's Natural Science Museum with a guided tour – focusing on the dinosaur exhibit – ending in a room on campus where the activities and projects had a dinosaur theme. Fourteen youth (doubled from 2018) participated in the camp.

All the campers enjoyed the experience and over half made a new friend. 86% reported learning new things and 92% wanted to come back next year. The teen counselors kept the campers engaged in the camp experience.

### **Winter Teen Leadership Camp**

4-H Teen Leadership Winter Camp was held the 8-9th of February at the Lions Camp in Rosholt. This year we Expanded our camping program from three counties to six county 4-H Youth Development Programs: Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Portage, Shawano, & Waupaca.

Eight chaperones and twenty teens participated in camp. Youth practiced cooperation, leadership, outdoor survival skills and communication skills. Portage County had four teens attend camp.





# Positive Youth Development

## Dr. Temple Grandin Presents to 4-H & FFA Youth

Portage County 4-H staff worked with UWSP personnel to coordinate Dr. Temple Grandin's visit to campus on December 3, 2019.

Dr. Grandin, a professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University, is a world renowned author and speaker on both autism and animal behavior. She has also authored over 400



Articles in both scientific journals and livestock periodicals on animal handling, welfare, and facility design. In 2017, she was inducted into The Women's Hall of Fame and in 2018 made a fellow by the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Dr. Grandin is an expert on both livestock handling equipment design and animal welfare and a strong proponent for the humane treatment of livestock. As a strong youth advocate she requested a separate session for 4-H and FFA youth and parents. The 4H and FFA programs recruited over 75 youth and adults to attend Dr. Grandin's program where she did a presentation on how to work with livestock resulting in the least amount of stress on the animal, providing a safe humane environment for both animal and caretaker. After the presentation youth were able to ask questions and meet with her. In the evening several 4-H families attended her autism presentation on 'Different Kinds of Minds' at Sentry Theater.

## **Summer Youth Gardens with the Boys & Girls Club (B&GC)**

At the Junction City and the Madison View B&GC sites the Extension 4-H program and Family Living programs supplied two AeroGarden's (hydroponic planters), with weekly educational activities, and snacks. We worked with the Nature Club in Junction City averaging six youth a week for a total of 12 un-duplicated youth. At Madison View site 18 youth for a total of 51 contacts occurred over nine weeks. This sites main focus was the Youth Giving Garden where youth harvested and weeded the garden weekly.



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