



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
PORTAGE COUNTY



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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**University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Portage County**

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# UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES *with* THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

As a statewide engagement arm of UW–Madison, the Division of Extension embodies the Wisconsin Idea to extend university knowledge to every corner of the state. That mission started in 1912 with Extension’s first agent making farm visits and continues today along with community and business development, youth engagement, and well-being programming. Our statewide network of educators and specialists with the UW–Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences and on UW campuses across Wisconsin is responding every day to emerging and longstanding hurdles residents are overcoming to compete and prosper. We’ve identified key opportunities to leverage local resources and leading research to affect change and improve lives through:

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## Supporting Wisconsin’s Agriculture Industry »

We use applied research from UW-Madison’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in addition to other Campuses along with educational outreach to support an economically viable agricultural industry that produces safe food in an environmentally responsible manner.

## Fostering Leadership and Civic Engagement »

We work with communities across the state to support individuals, groups, and organizations to enhance quality of life and improve overall well-being, leading to stronger communities today and for generations to come.

## Creating Positive, Healthy Change »

We catalyze positive change in Wisconsin families through evidence-based programs focused on nutrition, food security, food safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health, and substance misuse.

## Empowering Families and Communities »

We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding, enhance aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents, and help families put technology, mindfulness, and financial awareness to use.

## Enhancing Resilient Natural Resource Systems »

We help individuals and communities make informed decisions that support the state’s rich land, water, and mineral resources. We’re working to ensure that our resources remain at the heart of our communities, economies, and state identity.

## Furthering Positive Youth Development »

We prepare the youth of today to become effective, empathetic leaders of tomorrow. From teens advising local government to Wisconsin 4-H clubs, we offer diverse educational opportunities that put youth on the path to success in Wisconsin and beyond.



## 2020 Farm Safety Programming

Continual stress of farming due to prolonged poor farming economy and normal everyday challenges of farming can lead to health and safety challenges on the farm. A Farmer Appreciation Night was organized by me and two area farm wives providing an evening off the farm February 13, 2020. 130 Portage County farmers attended. A presentation by Jackie Carattini, Extension Wood County on managing stress opened the evening. Informational booths/displays with resources to help farmers deal with stress were set up around the perimeter. These included displays by Extension Portage County, The National Farm Medicine Center, Central Wisconsin Job Center, Agribility and others. A free meal and appreciation packages were provided by 32 area businesses and agribusinesses. Farmers learned the importance of stress management with tips to help them and the importance of taking care of themselves in these stressful times.



Developing a “safety first” attitude. Harvest season often brings with it longer working hours and a rush against time. I encourage farmers to take time to think, it may save their life or someone dear to them. To further this thinking, I wrote an article entitled “Think Safety During Harvesting and Manure Hauling” published in the September 3rd 2020 edition of the Agri-View newspaper. I wrote a related article “Let’s Make September Farm Safety and Health Month” published in the Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Newsletter distributed to over 400 local recipients and posted to the DATCP Producer-Led Watershed list serve and shared with 27 watershed groups around Wisconsin.

## Producer-Led Watershed Protection Projects

### Farmers of Mill Creek and Farmers for Tomorrow

My roles include coordinating field days and providing educational content, providing one-on-one consulting for farmers interested in cover crops and no-till planting, and assisting farmers in fulfilling their goals for environmental sustainability.







# Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

## Mill Creek Impacts by the Numbers:

- Hosted a “Lunch and Learn” February 11 on Prairies and Pollinators for 15 area farmers to learn about the benefits of having prairie and pollinator plantings incorporated in their cropping systems.
- Published April and September 2020 Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council newsletter. I authored articles and serve as editor. This newsletter provides educational content on agricultural conservation practices that reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. Distributed to over 400 Mill Creek farmers, agribusiness professionals, and stakeholders.
- Hosted four virtual “Lunch and Learns” April-June in place of field days and in-person meetings due to COVID-19. Participation ranged from 40 to 75 on any given day. I provided educational materials in the form of webinars, zoom meetings, and reading materials.
- Hosted Low-Disturbance Manure Injection Field Day where farmers learned about the latest low-disturbance manure injection equipment and the soil and water conservation benefits associated with it. 70 farmers attended.
- Hosted Drone Application of Cover Crop Seed “Lunch and Learn” where farmers learned about a new way to apply cover crop seed without soil compaction or damage to growing crops. 30 farmers attended.



## Farmers for Tomorrow Impacts by the Numbers:

- Hosted 2020 winter kickoff meeting of the Farmers for Tomorrow watershed project March 10<sup>th</sup>. Twenty-five area farmers and agribusiness professionals learned about cover crops, no-till planting, and other conservation practices to reduce nitrates in the groundwater.
- Hosted the September 8<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin DATCP's Producer-Led Watershed Protection Project “Planting New Ideas, Growing Conservation; A Producer-Led Webinar Series”. I interviewed Matt Hintz, lead farmer for the Farmers for Tomorrow River Watershed highlighting his use of cover crops and his nitrogen crediting from these cover crops. On average about 70 people from around the state participate in these webinars.
- Hosted a Fall Cover Crop Field Day September 21<sup>st</sup> focused on fall seeding of multi-species cover crops. Twenty-five participants learned about benefits of incorporating cover crops into cropping systems and using cover crops in vegetable cropping systems.





# Community Development

Nathan Sandwick, Community Development Educator

## Stevens Point Downtown Trade Area Analysis

In 2020 I continued work with downtown Stevens Point, Wisconsin. I worked with Extension colleagues to help customize an activity to inventory existing businesses in downtown Stevens Point. This activity contributed to a trade area profile of downtown Stevens Point in support of economic development efforts by a group of downtown business owners. Contents of the profile included:

- Geographic trade area
- Resident households
- Community education and employment profile
- A brief market analysis

I presented the trade area profile to leaders of the Stevens Point Alliance and provided the corresponding report to share with members and others who may be interested. Results have been used to guide decisions by business owners working as advocates for their individual businesses, as well as in their work as a coalition to marshal greater resources and investment to the downtown area. I also extended an opportunity for training especially geared for retailers interested in learning how social media can be used for marketing.



## Co-Leading Community Vitality & Placemaking Team

Co-leading Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking Team, I supported the team's work which continues to gain statewide recognition. I delivered multiple presentations about the Extension Community Vitality & Placemaking Team's approach to conducting design team visits in Wisconsin communities and shared examples of placemaking efforts in Portage County during one of two webinars attended by about 50 educators from throughout the state.

## Forward Fridays

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 conference of Wisconsin's Joint Council of Extension Professionals (JCEP) had to be cancelled. As a co-chair for the conference, I worked with several colleagues to instead establish an online weekly webinar series "Forward Fridays", that featured 25 presentations that had been selected for the 2020 conference to provide professional and personal development opportunities to Extension Colleagues.



# Community Development

## Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative

The Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative (CSGCC), is a collaborative comprised of County Land and Water Conservation Departments, Public Health Departments, UW Madison-Extension Departments, and County Board Supervisors in the Central Sands area of Adams, Juneau, Marquette, Portage, Waushara, Wood and Sauk Counties working together to meet the present and future needs for safe, high quality, reliable and sustainable drinking water.

I helped support constructive discussion among participants of CSGCC by developing a survey among participants and compiling the feedback. I also provided technical assistance and support enabling CSGCC to convene its quarterly meeting remotely.

## Design Wisconsin Focus Group for Three Lakes, WI

After suffering significant losses of downtown buildings to fires in 2019 the community of Three Lakes, Wisconsin participated in Design Wisconsin, a community placemaking program offered to communities across Wisconsin. The purpose of the program is to help communities discover and implement their shared vision of the future for their community. The program relies on a design team with expertise in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, economic development, art, as well as the natural and social sciences. This process also includes members from Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking Team.

As a member of Extension's Community Vitality & Placemaking Team I along with 17 other Extension Colleagues, facilitated 22 live, online community focus group meetings with Three Lakes Community members to gather information that will help the design team create their final report.

Through a variety of collaborative planning and public participation activities discussions took place regarding Three Lakes downtown area, growth, leadership, housing, and nature. As a result, the design team created a plan for the Three Lakes Community that was directly influenced by community members' stories about their community. The community members who participated are more involved and committed to creating collaborative community change by being part of the implementation plan in Three Lakes.







# Health & Well-Being



## 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.

## The Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the food security of Portage County residents due to income and job loss, as well as significant changes in local, regional, and national food systems. Based on increases in Portage County residents participating in FoodShare and federal Pandemic EBT benefits, we see a greater need for members of our community in accessing food that is healthy, safe, and affordable. FoodWise educators support our community by providing education on how families can stretch their food dollars in these difficult times and continue to put healthy meals on the table in their homes.

**Portage County** has seen a **32% increase in Food Share participation** (including adults and children) from prior to the pandemic.



*Based on comparison of FoodShare participation in February, 2020 and September, 2020. Data from Wisconsin Department of Health & Human Services.*

## Community IMPACTS



- Online Nutrition Education for Stevens Point Area students and Head Start students and families
- Full suite of online programs offered, for all ages. Classes included *Healthy Babies*, feeding toddlers with *Yuck to Yum* and healthy aging with online *Strong Bodies* classes.
- Continuation of *StrongBodies* nutrition and physical activity programming for seniors with fully online education, lead by Penny Schmitt
- Collaboration with Portage County Health Department to improve access to FoodShare and resources at the Farmers Market.
- PUP (Pop up Produce) Produce kits offered to over 250 families, providing the opportunity to learn how to grow vegetables at home with free containers, soil and seeds or seedlings.

## 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 WIC, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Children's Wisconsin, the Portage County Health Department and others to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.





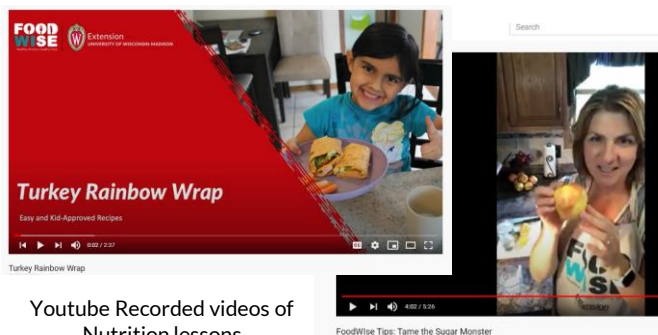
# Health & Well-Being



## From Classroom to Computer

Lessons in the classrooms were adapted in 2020 to meet the needs of students and teachers during the pandemic.

Students at McKinley Elementary still received nutrition education – it just looked different! Teachers were offered Live Virtual classes, interactive bitmoji classrooms or pre-recorded YouTube lessons.



Youtube Recorded videos of Nutrition lessons

Over 200 community members reached through direct virtual education



Bitmoji classroom provides an interactive learning environment



**Kelly Hammond**  
Coordinator  
Portage/Wood Counties



**Penny Schmitt**  
Educator  
Portage County

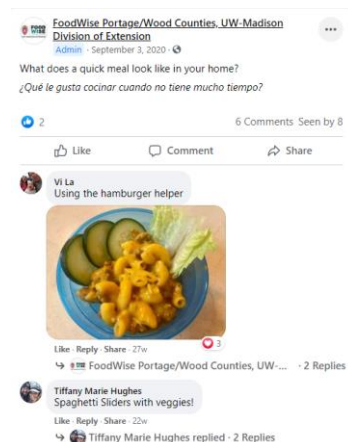


**Hannah Wendels**  
Educator  
Wood County

## Engaging Partners and Reaching New Audiences

**"this was so helpful!"**

*Tiffany, online program participant and mother of 5*



## "Pup" Pop Up Produce Kit Program



Around 300 PUP Gardens were distributed throughout the community through the Boys and Girls Club, Woman, Infant and Children (WIC), Head Start, Children's Wisconsin and Interfaith Food Pantry. Kits contained a 5 gallon container, seeds or seedlings and soil. Kits helped encourage home gardening and healthy eating during the pandemic.

**Contact Us to Learn more about our programs, upcoming classes and community partnerships**

Follow us online!

[www.portage.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/](http://www.portage.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/)



@PortageWoodFoodWise



# Human Development & Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Family Living Educator

## Strong Bodies

When the COVID-19 Safer at Home order came there were six StrongBodies classes meeting twice a week, spread throughout the county. The Human Development and Relationships Educator worked with FoodWise Educators to quickly adapt the program to be taught virtually, via Zoom. Starting on March 23 three classes per week were taught. Forty-four community members registered and most attended regularly. The participants were appreciative of being able to exercise in this remote way. They believed they will come out of COVID-19 stronger than when they went in. Since this training is designed for older adults at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 they enjoy the socialization this training provides. Many participants have not even been out of their homes nor let anyone else in their homes since the Safer at Home order was placed. Participants reported this training made them physically, mentally, and socially healthier.

## Money as You Grow

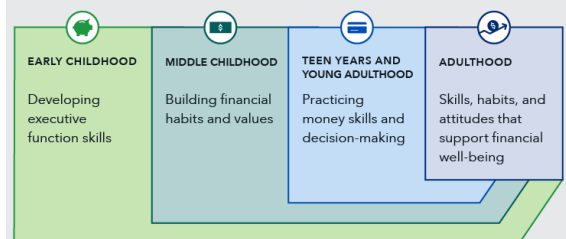
The Money as You Grow program is a partnership between UW-Extension and the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau (CFPB) to help parents and caregivers find additional age appropriate ways to teach their children about money and financial concepts. Head Start employees began home visitation schedules with families after the beginning of COVID-19 Safer at Home order. The Human Development and Relationships Educator delivered three sets of 35 books and Parent Guides to be presented to families from the Money as You Grow Bookshelf. This assisted families in talking with children about money concepts. UW-Extension designed the Parent Reading Guides to go along with reading the books. They encourage questions and activities for caregivers and children to discuss which further the understanding of the financial concepts discussed in the book, for age appropriate learning.

Due to COVID-19 we could no longer go to Head Start or the Boys and Girls Clubs to read these books. The Financial Security Team Educators, including the Portage County Human Development and Relationships Educator, read and recorded 27 of the books. With each book read a money conversation starter and fun activity to do at home was included. It was called the UW Money As You Grow Read and a new video was shared every Tuesday on the University of Wisconsin-Extension Human Development and Relationships Facebook page. The Human Development and Relationships Educator made sure all of our local organizations, serving young families, had this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/HDRInstitute/735746963631601/>

### Money as you grow: building blocks

How your child develops financially over the years



Find help at Money as You Grow

• Conversation starters • Activities • Online games and resources



# Human Development & Relationships

## Rent Ready

Rent Ready of Wisconsin was just getting established in our community when COVID-19 hit. Face-to-face classes were taking place once a month to teach homeless participants about leases, budgeting, improving credit, and what it means to be a good tenant. The Human Development and Relationships Educator, working with many community partners, including the Midwest Wisconsin Tenant Association, put together an educational program, and when a participant passed all the requirements, they could get an exception to rent despite their past rental or legal histories. Zoom classes were set up for this training to continue. Those individuals/families are now getting permanent non-predatory housing.



## Financial Wellness Coaching

Financial Wellness of Portage County is a group of community volunteer financial coaches trained by the Human Development and Relationships Educator. Their mission is to improve the quality of life by assisting families and individuals to become financially stable through coaching to develop personal finance skills. With COVID-19 the need for these free services increased dramatically. The volunteer coaches were retrained to deliver their services via Zoom. In addition to completing training on how to successfully coach via Zoom, coaches were provided financial resources relating to COVID-19, from the community, UW-Madison Division of Extension, Center for Financial Security, and the WI Department of Workforce Development. As a result, those in financial need have a free resource in the community they can rely on to get up-to-date financial services during this pandemic.



## Drug Court

Every year the Human Development and Relationships Educator spends 4-6 hours teaching our Drug Court participants financial wellness concepts. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau curriculum for incarcerated populations is used for this purpose. This has been very beneficial to participants by helping them pay off court fees and fines, establish a budget, and improve their credit. This year, because of COVID-19, three virtual classes were set up to teach these concepts to participants.







# Positive Youth Development

Connie Creighton, 4-H Educator

During 2020 the Portage County 4-H Youth Development program focused on using technology to safely support and empower volunteers and youth leaders to develop their life skills through leadership opportunities.

302 youth are enrolled in the Portage County 4-H program. Through our 4-H program older youth gain character, competence, confidence, communication, connection, caring, and community service through participation in 4-H activities. 107 4-H adult volunteers served the Portage County community through their work with youth. Our adult 4-H 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 our youth.



The typical 4-H adult volunteer contributes **7.9 hours a month** valued at **\$28.54 per hour** in Wisconsin (from independentsector.org), that volunteer service is worth **\$289,498** to Portage County each year. This does not include the volunteer hours youth engage in through their clubs, but if each youth spent a very conservative 5 hours a year that would add an additional 1,510 volunteer hours to the total.

4-H provides members with opportunities that connect them to their community. All our thirteen 4-H Clubs participate in one or more community service projects a year. Due to the Pandemic, I worked with clubs on how to adapt their programming to fit the social distancing directive. Many programs were canceled or postponed, but several new programs and community service activities were discussed and implemented such as: Make A Difference Day, Highway Pick-up, bell ringing for the Salvation Army in family groups, making blankets for senior centers, making toys for cats at the humane society, holiday baskets, caroling outside nursing homes, and one club made a video to be shared at nursing and assisted living homes that went viral and was on local new stations and in local papers.







# Positive Youth Development

## 2020 Virtual Program Adaptions

### **Camp in a Bag**

Prior to COVID-19 three summer face-to-face camp programs were offered to Portage County 4-H members. With face-to-face camping programs cancelled I developed a 4-H summer camp program that involved several hands-on activities where families could participate in the camping program at home and/or they were invited to attend a series of Zooms that were taught by camp counselors. I recruited 4-H teen leaders to be camp counselors and to help plan and teach the virtual camping program targeting 4-H and non-4-H youth in kindergarten through grade five. Camp activities included: tie dying camp T-Shirts, STEM activity of making Cloud Dough, Nature activity of dissecting owl pellets as well as building model rockets and campfire programs. The goal of this program was to work with 4-H teen leaders giving them an opportunity to teach and lead youth camping programs. As well as to give families a hands-on safe summer camping experience they can engage in from home and as a family. This was an expanded opportunity for 4-H older youth to plan, teach, and mentor younger youth.



### **4-Her's Teaching 4-Her's**

Due to avid interest in virtual youth-led programming, I put out a request to see if any 4-H youth were interested in offering virtual on-line teaching sessions. We titled these sessions 4-Her's Teaching 4-Her's. A total of eight workshop were offer over a three-month period. In total six teens planned and taught eight virtual workshops. Topics covered in these sessions included: goat care & preparing your goat for the fair, preparing your chickens for the fair, rabbit care & showmanship, cat showmanship, dog obedience, flower arrangement, and friendship bracelet making. The last class of friendship bracelet making was offered state-wide through the 4-H Virtual Learning site. I recruited and met with teens before their workshop to make sure they had a teaching plan and were comfortable with the technology.

### **County Club Officer Training**

Nine 4-H members participated the County 4-H Club Officer Training session. Two teens from the 4-H Teen Leader's Board helped teach the training. Youth who participated in the class increased their knowledge about parliamentary procedure, learned about how to run an effective meeting, and how putting fun into meetings enhances the members' experience and aids in providing a welcoming environment. The leadership skills youth gain when they assume an officer role in their club are a valuable part of positive youth development.

### **Virtual Program Feedback**

The Teens who taught at virtual workshops like camp in a bag, club officer training, 4-Hers Teaching 4-Hers, and fall forum have reported the following impact 4-H has had on their life. These excerpts were taken from the county applications before they taught virtual programs. "My 4-H experience has taught me many valuable life skills like public speaking, leadership, how to work with others, financial skills and responsibility." ; "My 4-H experience has contributed to my development as a leader by giving me more confidence in my teaching and leadership (skills)"; "4-H has taught me leadership skills and given me confidence to be a more outgoing and less shy. I have learned how to interact with other people I am also better at presenting in front of a group".



# Positive Youth Development

## 4-H Charter Training

A 4-H Charter training via Zoom was held to educate clubs leaders on changes that are occurring this year and the purpose of Charting 4-H Clubs and Groups using the revised SMART Goal document. Six 4-H club leaders learned how to work with their 4-H club members on deciding what goals they want to work on for the next year. Two of the six leaders watched a state zoom on Charters. All the county clubs and groups submitted SMART Goals in their charter paperwork with many clubs working with their members to complete the document.

## Fall Forum

As part of the state Expanding Access Team, I volunteered to teach a session at the 2020 Wisconsin State Virtual Fall Forum. I recruited three teen leaders, who had taught in other virtual county programs, and 4-H adult teen leader advisor. Our county 4-H group planned and taught a hands-on interactive session on the opening night of the conference. The session was offered Friday night where we repeated a twenty-minute session 4 times. Our session was Welcome & Inclusion at Club Meetings. We provided participants with examples and resources they can use to create a welcoming environment in their club. Participants learned and were given tools to help them create a welcoming inclusive environment in their 4-H Club meetings. A total of 87 youth and adults attended our sessions.



# Staff Directory

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# Extension

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