



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Table of Contents

Extension	3
Agriculture	4
Community Development	7
Health & Well-Being	9
Human Development & Relationships	11
Positive Youth Development	13
Staff Directory.....	15



This icon denotes educational or planning efforts that work toward improving water quality in Portage County, Central Wisconsin and the State as whole. While these efforts are highlighted in this annual report, there is more work being done by Extension to address water quality concerns outside of what is here. For more information about these efforts, or other efforts Extension has undertaken regarding water quality, please reach out to our office.

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UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES *with* THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Agriculture & Horticulture »

Our network of researchers, outreach specialists, and local educators are on the leading edge of creating practical solutions for livestock and crop production in addition to farm and labor management. We provide customized guidance, business planning assistance, and industry knowledge for what today's agricultural operators are facing.

Community & Economic Development »

Businesses, governments, and organizations succeed through development from Extension educators and specialists. We provide education for elected officials to understand their roles and responsibilities in helping communities thrive. We offer businesses the direct technical assistance and connection to support structures they need to help them succeed. Our rural entrepreneurship program identifies ways for businesses to overcome challenges and take advantage of unique opportunities.

Health & Well-Being »

We're supporting positive change for families through physical and mental health programs in addition to structural improvements needed to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Our physical fitness classes and mental health training equips people with the tools they need to lead healthy, active lives. We provide public health resources and tools for community action. We provide guidance on systems changes for food security and food access.

Families & Finances »

Reinforcing family connections, financial knowledge, and strong relationships is at the heart of Extension's programming. We support learning and emotional bonding by building literacy skills in justice-involved families. We guide community and individual development across lifespans. We teach financial security through rent planning and budget management.

Natural Resources & Conservation »



We work at the crossroads of communities, natural resources, and agriculture to protect our environmental assets and guide resource management. We support individual and regional water-well testing along with education to address safe drinking water. We educate farmers, businesses, and communities on safe practices to ensure access to plentiful, sustainably managed sources of food, water, and energy.

Positive Youth Development & 4-H »

Community-led 4-H programs deliver quality activities and leadership opportunities that are leading to engaged, energized, and informed young people across the state. 4-H is a movement — in Wisconsin, 98% of our 4-H members are inspired to make positive changes in their communities. They're developing leadership skills, building connections, and finding what topics spark their interest.



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

2021 Wisconsin Processing Crops Meeting

Vegetable production is a vital part of the economy of Central Wisconsin. The counties of Portage, Waushara, Adams, Green Lake and Juneau produce 68% of the state's potatoes, 49% of the sweet corn, 62% of the snap beans, and 38% of the peas. Around 140,000 acres in this area are used in the production of potatoes, sweet corn, green beans and peas.

The Wisconsin Processing Crops Meeting concentrates specifically on issues affecting commercial vegetable production in Wisconsin. Organized by Ken Schroeder Extension Portage County University of Wisconsin-Madison in cooperation with UW-Madison and UW-Madison Division of Extension vegetable production specialists. Growers attending get a head start on the next growing season with expert research reports, information on new technologies and agribusiness advice. This meeting is a great place for growers to get the advice, tips and insights that will give them the edge they need in a tough business.

52 vegetable growers, crop consultants, and vegetable processors were updated on; corn earworm resistance, insecticide regulatory review and new products in processing crops, introduced to an online water stewardship course, irrigation fertility management for dark red kidney beans, implications of consumer sweet corn trends for Wisconsin, and cucurbit downy mildew pathogen biology and management. Attendees were from throughout Wisconsin and Michigan, Minnesota, and Iowa.


2021 Research Projects

Evaluation of Cereal Rye Cover Crop Management on White Mold and Weed Suppression – An on-farm research project to evaluate the effects of Roller/Crimper termination of a cereal rye cover crop compared to tillage termination on White Mold and Weed Suppression in soybean production. Results from this research will help farmers and crop consultants improve white mold control and weed management in soybeans. On-farm participatory research was used.



Roller Crimper Field Day

2021 Adaptive Nitrogen Management Strategies for Corn

 An on-farm research project to evaluate adaptive nitrogen management strategies for field corn to reduce the environmental impact of growing corn. The goal of this project is to improve grower's understanding of N cycling such that they can implement and adapt N management practices to optimize economic return and improve efficiency of N fertilizer resulting in more sustainable corn production. On-farm participatory research was used to meet this goal.



2021 Corn Nitrogen Trials



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

2021 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.

Mill Creek Impacts by the Numbers



\$24,395 in cost-share funds and \$7,354 in educational materials and outreach were provided to farmers as part of this project from a Wisconsin Department of Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant.

- 810 acres no-till planting cost-shared
- 334 acres single species cover crops cost-shared
- 72 acres multi-species cover crops cost-shared
- 3 acres of pollinator habitat cost-shared
- Hosted a “Lunch and Learn” April 7th informing area farmers about the Youth Education efforts of the watershed project and to get input on future programs. 14 farmers and 3 County staff attended.
- Held 2 youth education on-farm field days where youth learned about soil health, cover crops, prairie and pollinator plantings, and groundwater. 56 youth from 3-K through 4th grade attended day one and 24 first graders day two. Visit this link to watch a short video: go.wisc.edu/lp5219
- Hosted a “Lunch and Learn” June 15th where 25 farmers learned about using a roller/crimper and rye cover crop for weed management in soybeans, watched field demonstrations of roller/crimping, and learned about the research project to evaluate effects of rye cover crop on white mold and weed suppression in soybeans.
- Hosted a Field Day December 8th where 60 farmers, agribusiness professionals, youth, and area residents learned about conservation activities in the Mill Creek watershed, cover crop inter-seeding, and viewed fall-seeded cover crop fields comparing drill seeding to aerial seeding.



2021 Mill Creek Youth Education Day



2021 Mill Creek December Field Tour



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Published April, August, and December 2021 Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council newsletters. 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. Additionally, is posted to the DATCP Producer-Led watershed protection list-serv making it available to 30 watershed groups around Wisconsin.



www.facebook.com/FarmersOfMillCreek

Farmers for Tomorrow Impacts by the Numbers

 \$25,012 in cost-share funds and \$4,988 in educational materials and outreach were provided to farmers as part of this project provided by a Wisconsin DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant.

- 730 acres no-till planting cost-shared
- 580 acres single species cover crops cost-shared
- 267 acres multi-species cover crops cost-shared
- Cost-shared manure analysis for N, P, K, S and total solids prior to land spreading.
- Hosted 2021 winter kickoff meeting of the Farmers for Tomorrow watershed project February 9th. Thirty area farmers and agribusiness professionals learned about cover crops, no-till planting, and other conservation practices to reduce nitrates in the groundwater. Free well water nitrate testing was provided to 11 area farmers.
- Participated in June 17th Fishers and Farmers Partnership for the Upper Mississippi River Basin – Boots on the Ground Conversation along with Matt Hintz, lead farmer for Farmers for Tomorrow River project. Attendees learned how we are working together to demonstrate and promote soil health and improve ground water quality in the Tomorrow/Waupaca River Watershed.
- Published first edition of the Farmers for Tomorrow River Watershed Council Newsletter September 15, 2021. I authored articles and serve as editor. This newsletter provides educational content on agricultural conservation practices that reduce environmental impacts of agriculture. Plans are to publish 3 editions in 2022.



FFTWTC No-Till Field Day



www.facebook.com/FarmersforTomorrow



Community Development

Nathan Sandwick, Community Development Educator

Community Economic Development & Financial Stability

Economic development practitioners have historically focused their attention on business development efforts. Portage County is among a growing number of communities pursuing a strategy to also intentionally attract people - in part by enhancing quality of place and becoming an ever greater place to live, work and play.

Nathan continued to help lead Extension's Community Vitality and Placemaking Team and its nationally-recognized work, and share insights with interested community leaders including those here in Portage County. In September, Sandwick and two colleagues presented on Community Placemaking in Wisconsin as part of a USDA Rural Workforce Innovation Network (RWIN) workshop on placemaking. Record-high attendance (422 registered participants) shows there is interest in placemaking among practitioners involved in RWIN.

Nathan assisted local leaders in meaningful community engagement efforts, such as a community survey and open house to inform community decisions in the Village of Park Ridge (in 2021). Communities are well advised to strive to include everyone, and to address the challenge of welcoming newcomers and embracing new information and ideas they bring.



Park Ridge Village Hall

Nathan also precipitated dialogue among local practitioners about the availability, affordability, quality and relevance of choices that contribute to quality of life (attractions and things to do, the variety of housing options, environmental quality and resource efficiency, and the availability of health care services). While immediately informative for participants, our local discussion was also meant to inform the Competitive Wisconsin, Inc (CWI) Be Bold: Rural Resurgence Initiative aimed at formulating helpful development strategies and complimentary policy recommendations.

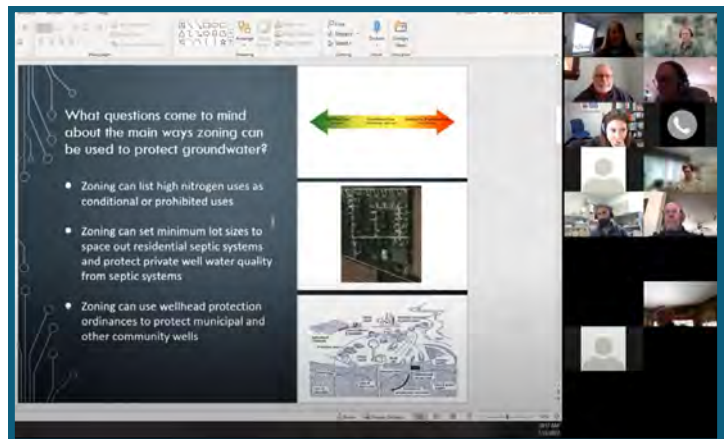
Natural Resource Management



Building Capacity through Regional Collaboration: Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative.

Six counties participate in the Central Sands Groundwater County Collaborative (CSGCC). Sandwick has often helped convene CSGCC's regular meetings, especially lately as they began to meet more-frequently to keep a new grant-funded research project on track.

A grant-funded research project began in 2021 (Advancing the Visibility of Nitrate and Neonicotinoid Findings...) a post-doc researcher was hired to compile and analyze well test data available to date from numerous sources. Extension helped a great deal to develop the communications plan for this project; and colleagues and I coordinated efforts to collect various pieces of relevant information from participating counties to support the funded research, enable outreach, and develop good groundwater guidance.





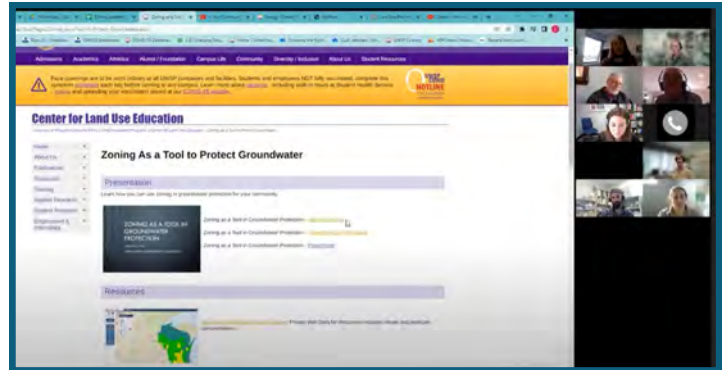
Community Development

Nathan Sandwick, Community Development Educator

Nathan shared research showing how some initiatives have engaged community stakeholders in natural resource-oriented scenario planning efforts to expand knowledge and constructively combine an awareness of local interests with an understanding of system dynamics.

Well test data is compiled for every township in participating counties. This is already being used by participating county staff, to inform selection and pursuit of conservation efforts. Data collocation recommendations have been noted and may result in increased utility of data sets for analytical purposes in the future.

Collaborators share knowledge about the merits of various water sampling practices, as discussed among conservation professionals, and funding opportunities including ARPA-LFRF. Accordingly, several counties are pursuing the use of ARPA-LFRF funds to support expanded well sampling work and/or to support provision of safe drinking water as needed.



Assisting Wisconsin's solid waste management professionals in building capacity through strategic planning.

Community Development Educator Nathan Sandwick (with help from Lissa Radke of Ashland County) convened and facilitated a series of strategic planning sessions for the Badger Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA). The planning team involved in the effort identified four key issues along with intentional actions to address each. Partway through the effort, there is shared vision and clarity of four key issues, goals, and high-priority activities.

Stakeholder feedback from multiple avenues will be used to inform revisions to a draft strategic plan before formal adoption. Feedback from stakeholders on programming interests (dot survey, online survey) and on four key issues (comment box) was invited during a statewide professional conference.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Extension and associations supporting Wisconsin towns, villages, cities and counties recognize the Local Fiscal Recovery Fund as a significant source of one-time funding for local governments. We coordinated efforts in 2021 to inform local officials about the program and the importance of strategic public investments. I called clerks of municipalities in Portage County to ensure they all knew about a short timeframe for timely action to maintain their eligibility, and to offer assistance. All municipalities in Portage County took action to maintain eligibility.



continued on page 12



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY



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

In response to the ongoing challenges in reaching SNAP-Ed audiences with direct education during the pandemic, FoodWise increased the delivery of indirect education. This included an expanded social media and website presence, local online and print resources, electronic materials and handouts, and pre-recorded videos; all with the overall goal to continue to reach audiences with helpful nutrition information and resources empowering participants to live healthier lives.

Portage County continued to deliver nutrition education **reaching over 500 participants** through the use of in-person & virtual lessons, bitmoji classrooms as well as handouts and resources.



Community IMPACTS 2021



- FoodWise responded to the ongoing pandemic by continuing to provide evidence-based, community-responsive programming and education
- Introduced a new food resource program to the community, providing stockboxes of pantry basics to eligible seniors and bringing in over 1,000 pounds of food monthly
- Secured a 200K grant for improved farmers market access, including partnering with UWSP to provide local internships for data collection and evaluation
- Partnered with Children's Wisconsin to expand programs offered to at-risk families
- Collaborated with local food pantries to build a network around resources for food-insecure community members
- Provided in-person and virtual education to McKinley Elementary, Head Start 4K and summer school students in the Stevens Point Area
- Continue to provide StrongBodies classes virtually, while offering a hybrid in-person class with the ACRD

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, ADRC of Portage County, Farmshed, UW-Stevens Point, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Children's Wisconsin, the Portage County Health Department, Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership of Portage County, Stevens Point Area Schools, HEAL Coalition and others** to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.

Learner-Centered Education in 2021: In-Person, Virtual or Take-Home

Throughout 2021, FoodWise reached community members from preschool to retired seniors with learner-centered nutrition education. Educator Penny Schmitt taught in-person lessons at McKinley Elementary and taught in summer school classes for the Stevens Point District. In addition, Penny taught virtual snack preparation to 4K students and families at Head Start, and taught a family-focused meal preparation and MyPlate basics to at-risk families through Children's Wisconsin. Finally, strength-training Strongbodies classes were offered, including in-person, virtual and hybrid. This year showed our ability to truly meet our partners and learners where they are, while continuing to provide high-quality education and resources throughout the community.



Educators Penny and Hannah model trying new foods

"I think the lesson was awesome. The kids were engaged and interested. I talked to them afterwards about their plans moving forward and I could tell that they took a lot out of the lesson"
-6th grade teacher

200K USDA Grant secured to improve access to Farmers Markets in Central Wisconsin

After 2 years of research, the Central Wisconsin farmers market promotion workgroup landed a large 2-year planning grant to research and develop business plans that will support FoodShare/EBT access and improve both farmers' profits and improve access for limited-resource audiences. Grant includes hiring a Farmers Market Regional Coordinator as well as paid local interns from UWSP and UW-Madison to engage in research.

Stockboxes Brings Food to Seniors; Strongbodies Makes them Stronger

FoodWise brought together a fantastic coalition of community members and mobilized an entire food-distribution program for seniors in less than 6 months. The program provides free 30-pound boxes of food to low-income seniors; available for pickup once a month.



Stockbox of food available for FREE to eligible seniors



Kelly Hammond
Coordinator
Portage/Wood Counties



Penny Schmitt
Educator
Portage County



Hannah Wendels
Educator
Wood County

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Contact Us!

Learn more about our programs, upcoming classes and community partnerships

Follow us online!

www.portage.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/



@PortageWoodFoodWise



FOOD WISE
Healthy choices, healthy lives.

UW-MADISON EXTENSION

FoodWise education is funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program – EFNEP. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.



Human Development & Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development & Relationships Educator

Financial Wellness of Portage County (FWPC) is a program for families and individuals, where participants learn how to create financial goals and gain money management skills. The goal of this program is to enable participants to prepare for and take charge of household financial situations that occur due to changes in income or unforeseen hardships. In 2021 FWPC served 75 individuals/families, compared to 30 in 2020.



RentReady monthly in-person courses for renters, where participants learn how to find and apply for rental housing, understand their responsibilities as a renter, how to communicate effectively with their landlords, and manage housing expenses. Through this program, homeless populations and those who have negative rental records can increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public support. We have over 30 placed in the RentReady program and have placed many more working with clients in the Salvation Army Rapid Rehousing programs who also attend our course.



RentReady Course at the IDEA Center

Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) a series of three seminars for parents/caregivers of teenagers where they learn simple and practical strategies to help build healthy relationships, increase confidence, independence, and develop a healthy lifestyle. Triple P seminars contribute to supporting family stability and resiliency. Held because the mental health of teenagers in Portage County has greatly declined during the COVID pandemic.



Financial Training for Drug Court participants multiple trainings teaching financial wellness concepts using Consumer Financial Protection Bureau curriculum for incarcerated populations. This has been very beneficial to participants by helping them pay off court fees and fines, establish a budget, and improve their credit. The goal is to help them make a successful transition.

Lead Encouraging Financial Conversations, a six-module course for social workers, case managers, and community agency staff where they learn about financial competency skills such as goal setting, budgeting, building credit and paying off debts, strategies for saving money, and how to engage their clients in money management discussions. The goal of this effort is to build their knowledge and confidence when engaging clients in financial conversations.



Financial Training Course



Human Development & Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development & Relationships Educator

Financial Wellness at UWSP

Students attending UWSP have little experience with loans and do not understand the ramifications of this debt long-term. The Student Financial Security Association has been established at UWSP for seven years, due in part to my teaching a day-long financial coaching seminar on campus once each semester. This association offers peer-to-peer financial coaching and financial education events. Most of their questions and education focus on increasing knowledge concerning student loans.

In 2021, 26 student financial coaches were trained. Capacity is built in this program by training past coaches to mentor new coaches. In evaluating the training program, the following quotes were received from students. "This training should be a requirement for every student." and "I came to this training feeling very uncomfortable about being a financial wellness coach and I am leaving feeling much more prepared." The financial coaches go on to help other students improve their knowledge of student loans and other financial topics. This helps to improve financial literacy on campus and after graduation.



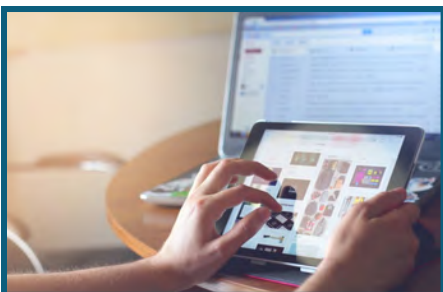
UWSP Financial Training Course



Community Development

continued from page 8

Nathan with community leaders who, with help from a Portage County planner, are working on updating the comprehensive plan for the Village of Park Ridge. I discussed guidance for gathering public input, and shared related resources and examples of community surveys, to assist. I facilitated monthly planning sessions of the village's newly formed strategic planning task force, and enlisted a state specialist to help at times. Extension led efforts to gather useful input from community members - notably a community survey, and a participatory workshop yielding a wealth of perspectives and constructive input. I synthesized all this input, and continue to support the strategic planning effort.



He also provided information about Portage County's broadband needs upon request - emphasizing concerns about cost as an expense among subscribers, and as a barrier for many others. Presented updated information about broadband service availability and funding to local leaders of the Wisconsin Towns Association. At least one municipality used anticipated ARPA funds to assist in the completion of a broadband expansion project.



Wisconsin 4-H

Connie Creighton, 4-H Educator

In 4-H the four H's are head, heart, hands, and health. That means we are committed to providing opportunities for youth to learn life skills like decision-making, problem solving, caring for others, generosity, making healthy choices, and more. During 2021 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.



296 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. 81 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 to 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* - 2020), that volunteer service is worth \$219,153 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 1,480 volunteer hours to the total. 4-H provides members with opportunities that connect them to their community. All of our 4-H Clubs participate in one or more community service projects a year.

4-H prepares youth for successful futures by engaging in fun, hands-on 4-H activities. In 2021 we held the 4-H Winter Leadership Camp where 45 youth from 16 counties, four from Portage County, participated in a two-day virtual camp. As a result of camp 86% of campers reported that the program helped them learn more about themselves and helped them appreciate the differences in other people and in leadership styles. **When asked to name at least one big thing they learned about themselves from this experience, teens reported the following: "I learned that I value defined roles and structure when building a team, and that while I am comfortable in both a leadership and participatory role, I prefer a leadership role", "I learned how to write a good smart goal".**

In June Waupaca and Portage County offered an in-person day camp (masking and social distancing required) with eighteen youth, seven counselors, and four adult leaders. Camp was held at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. Campers ranged from second to seventh grade and the counselors were eighth grade and older. Counselors attended a virtual training session to prepare them for their leadership responsibilities. Keeping in mind the developmental stages of youth, second and third grade campers had a separate educational tract from the older campers. Youth experienced STEM, outdoor adventures, team building activities, and arts & crafts. Campers reported enjoying trying new activities like archery and canoeing and making new friends. Campers and Counselors who completed the evaluation felt safe and welcomed at camp.



4-H Camp





Wisconsin 4-H

Connie Creighton, 4-H Educator

4-H Educators in Portage and Waupaca Counties held virtual 4-H Club Officer Training program.

Twenty youth participated in the training and three older teens from Portage County helped lead parts of the training. When asked on the evaluations, what is one thing you will do or try in your club as a result of officer training, responses included: make meetings educational and fun to attend; I will be very welcoming to new members; officer training made me more confident so I'm going to speak up more at a meeting and include leading, laughing, and learning at every meeting.

4-H Tech Changemakers is a national grant funded program that has teens exploring the impact of the digital divide in their community and deciding on a plan of action to address the issue of educating adults on the use of technology in searching for employment, using digital search engines, and other digital skills.

Portage County has 4 youth 4-H Tech Changemakers (TCM) who have been meeting weekly since September planning their digital program teaching sessions. In early November TCM was invited to a virtual Hmong UpLift Board meeting where they presented their programming options they could teach at the Hmong Digital Learning Class. The board picked social media as the topic and TCM received an invitation to work with the students who are enrolled in their digital learning class.

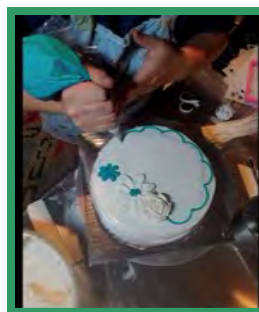


Hmong UpLift Group with Tech Changemakers

TCM developed and gave an informational presentation to the Hmong UpLift Digital Literacy Class at CAP Services in December. Two 4-H teens provided an in-depth look on different types of social media. The 4-H teens presented on privacy challenges, how to change privacy settings, and on both the positive and challenging attributes of each media format that families should be aware of to make informed decisions. CAP services provided a translator for the group.

Other hands-on programs

- Market Animal Committee (MAC) meetings and workshops
- Hula Hoop making workshop;
- Two Discovering Rock virtual workshops;
- A virtual cake decorating workshop;
- A series of virtual sewing project meetings for beginner sewers;
- A virtual Camp in a Bag program for younger 4-H and non-4-H members where a 4-H teen leader helped plan and teach both sessions; and
- Three Robotic project workshops where five individuals and two families participated in the classes. The classes start with building your robot, then programming the robot to move, and the final class was using sensors to direct the action of the robots.





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