



We teach, learn, lead and serve, connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.

4-H – Positive Youth Development

Connie Creighton, 4-H Youth Development Agent

- Worked with two 4-H project leaders to plan, facilitate and host a series of county-wide sewing project meetings for beginner sewers. The project meetings are targeting youth with limited sewing experience who want to learn the basics of sewing and who want to learn how to use a sewing machine. This is the third year the sewing project series is being held. The first year the meetings were virtual and last year and this year they have transitioned into in-person meetings where youth are encouraged to bring their sewing machines. These meetings are meant to increase interest in the sewing project, provide a hands-on active learning environment and to build confidence and relevant life skills in the youth. I attended the last two sessions to demonstrate how to make reversible tote bags and how to make zipper pouches. This year there is one more instructor and eleven participants.
- The 4-H Tech Changemakers (TCM) program was started in 2022 by a national grant with the premise of using teens-as-teachers with teen leaders learning digital skills to teach to adults. Portage County has five youth 4-H Tech Changemakers (TCM) who started meeting in March, after taking a three-month break. Currently Portage County (TCM) are developing an informational workshop on social media and privacy for 4-H parents and adults. Prior to the event they are sending out a survey about the type of technology they want highlighted.
- At the Portage County Business Council Agri-Business Banquet Sara Hintz, an Adult 4-H Volunteer Leader, and Cody Kaminski, a 4-H youth leader, were honored for their outstanding contribution to youth in agriculture.

Sara Hintz is a great advocate for youth in agriculture; encouraging youth to get involved and helping them when they do. Her strong leadership and organizational skills support both the youth and adults.

Cody Kaminski gives demonstrations and mentors 4-H members teaching them how to select, fit, raise, train, groom and show their animals. Like Sara he is a great advocate for youth in agriculture.

- A Demonstration and Speaking Event was held in March for 4-H youth members. Youth practiced communication skills, learning to talk in front





of an audience, sharpening the life skills that helped them to be better communicators in the future. Eight youth, eleven entries, participated in the 4-H Demonstration & Speaking Contest to showcase their communication skills.



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Central Wisconsin Processing Crops Meeting. A seminar for commercial vegetable growers, vegetable processors, and crop consultants where participants receive pre-season crop production and research updates to improve the sustainability of their operations. I organize and facilitate this event, bringing in UW-Madison and UW-Division of Extension vegetable production specialists. Forty-Five attendees got a head start on the 2023 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.
- Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo held at Mid-State Technical College in Wisconsin Rapids March 22, 2023. I am part of the planning committee and served as moderator for the afternoon producer panel. Fifty attendees learned from local farmers firsthand about conservation practices that work on farms in central Wisconsin.
- Published the March/April editions of the Farmers of Mill Creek and Farmers for Tomorrow River Watershed Council newsletters. Content included articles on: No-Till Planter Setup, 2023 Conservation Incentives, Waterhemp Management, How to Go About Testing Biologicals/Microbial Products, Overseeding Cover Crops, and Termination Methods for Winter Rye and Annual Ryegrass. If interested in receiving these newsletters contact Extension Portage County 715-346-1316.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A presentation for the general public (Garden Dreams symposium) where participants learned about herbaceous ornamentals, their uses in the landscape, and how to incorporate them so they thrive in personal landscapes. The goal of this effort was to empower individuals by increasing awareness and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution. – *Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator Wood & Marathon County Extension*



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Additional Natural Resources work being conducted in Portage County



A hybrid event for farmers, conservation professionals, agriculture industry professionals, watershed groups, and concerned citizens where they learn about new conservation practices and how to implement them in an agricultural setting. The goal of is to encourage profitable farming by building resiliency, diversifying farming operations, reducing inputs, and increasing farmers' return on investment. - *Anna James, Natural Resources Educator, Wood County Extension*

- Planning for and developing a social indicator survey for producers in the 10 Mile Creek and 14 Mile Creek Watersheds in collaboration with Adams County Land & Water Conservation. The goal of this effort is to gain information about awareness, attitudes, constraints, capacity, and behaviors that are expected to lead to water quality improvement and protection. - *Anna James, Natural Resources Educator, Wood County Extension*



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 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.

FoodWise

Mallory McGivern Nutrition Administrator; Penny Schmitt, FoodWise Nutrition Educator

- A quarterly nutrition education series utilizing the MyPlate for MyFamily curriculum for adults with teenage children as part of the Children's Wisconsin Parents and Teens connecting series where they learn about incorporating healthy eating habits into the family routine, including family meals and eating more fruits and vegetables. The goal of this effort is to encourage healthy eating behaviors at home.
- A series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) in partnership with Portage County ADRC, where older adults also receive nutrition and health education. Participants also engage in regular strength training exercises to improve muscle strength, balance, and flexibility so they can stay healthy and socially connected.
- A six-week nutrition education series utilizing the Serving up MyPlate curriculum for youth in third grade classrooms in McKinley Elementary where they learn about eating a variety of foods from MyPlate, label reading, the importance of breakfast, physical activity, and hand washing. The goal of this effort is to encourage healthy habits in school and at home.



Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- A quarterly meeting with the Financial Wellness of Portage County (FWPC) Board where we discussed options to increase referrals to the financial wellness program, including bringing on a marketing student to promote the FWPC's on-line presence. The goal is to increase access to resources that help build financial wellness and stability within the community.
- A quarterly networking group (Right from the Start, RFTS) where professionals working with families who have young children can share resources and make connections. Through this, professionals can better serve the communities and young families they work with, promoting family and community strengths.
- A 12-session virtual series (Aging Mastery Program) for seniors, where participants learn how to navigate longer lives through healthy eating, exercise, financial fitness, healthy relationships, medication management, and community engagement. The purpose of this program is to develop sustainable behaviors that lead to improved health, stronger economic security, enhanced well-being, and increased societal participation among seniors.
- 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.
- 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.
- A course 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, homeless populations and those who have negative rental records are able to increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public supports.