



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

- Volunteer adults and youth recognition programs were held in November 2023. Fifty-three adults and six youth attended the 4-H Leaders Recognition Banquet. Nineteen 4-H adult volunteer leaders were recognized for their years of leadership in the 4-H program, with a combined total of 251 years of volunteer service in the Portage County 4-H program.
- Over 59 adults and 95 youth attended the 4-H Award program. Youth were recognized for their role in leadership events, programs, and positions. Thirteen 4-H youth received special recognition for the leadership they showed in their club and county programs and projects. Thirty-seven first year members and 54 4-H members were recognized for their participation in leadership. This program is youth focused with the outgoing President of the 4-H Teen Leaders hosting the program with help from the 4-H Ambassadors and the Award Committee.
- The Wisconsin 4-H Program has received funding to implement a statewide 4-H AmeriCorps program. Wisconsin 4-H will have AmeriCorps State members who will serve in 29 counties across Wisconsin between September 2023 through August 2024. AmeriCorps members will support the development of new and expanded relationships in counties, serving in partnership with local organizations to build capacity in communities, start new 4-H clubs, and recruit additional volunteers to grow Wisconsin 4-H, expand access, and reach new audiences. The Portage County 4-H Leaders Association received a \$3500 grant from the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin. The 4-H Leaders contributed another \$500 making it \$4,000 to fund a half-time AmeriCorps. I applied and was approved for a half-time position, 900 hours, starting January 2024 through August 2024.
- The Portage County 4-H program developed and led a ceramic workshop where members and families learned about different painting techniques. The Portage County 4-H Leaders received a donation of over 80 boxes of ceramics. The county 4-H ceramic adult and youth leader held its third workshop out at the Boston School of Forest. The generous donation allows for us to offer the workshops free of charge.



Additional 4-H Program work being conducted in Portage County

- Development of a grant between Portage, Waupaca, and Iowa counties 4-H to apply for a \$2,000 grant. If awarded, the grant will allow the coalition to expand summer camping programming for youth attending camp. – *Dan Brant, Iowa County 4-H Program Educator*



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Nitrogen Optimization Project plots harvested 11-10-2023.
- Moderated the afternoon Badger Crops and Soils Update meeting in Stevens Point 11-29-2023
- Planning the Wisconsin Water and Soil Health Conference to be held in Wisconsin Dells December 7 and 8.
- Doing yield checks for the National Corn Growers Association corn yield contest.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A 13-week, in-person course for gardeners living in the Fox Valley to learn fundamental knowledge of horticulture with an emphasis in Integrated Pest Management. The goal is to increase decision-making and problem-solving skills, improve plant health and productivity, and implement gardening practices that have a positive impact on the environment. – *Madisen Potratz, Horticulture Educator Winnebago County*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- A series of meetings with a workgroup of Extension staff to plan and prepare for a community engagement pilot process [Community Centered Solar Development]. The goal of this effort is to improve the planning and community engagement process to align large scale solar projects with benefits for the communities.
- Participation in the Central Wisconsin Community Land Trust Work Group where the group focuses on developing a sustainable structure to preserve affordable housing in Portage County. The goal of this group is to establish a community land trust that ensures long-term housing affordability and stability in Portage County.

Additional Natural Resources work being conducted in Portage County



A social indicator survey to better understand agricultural producer's awareness, attitudes, constraints, capacity, and behavior towards water quality and conservation practices. Results from this survey will provide conservation practitioners and educators with important



information for planning, implementing, and evaluating conservation practices based on the needs of agricultural producers. – *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; Michelle Van Krey, Healthy Communities Coordinator; Penny Schmitt, FoodWise Nutrition Educator

- A quarterly nutrition education series in Portage County utilizing the Feeding for Healthy Eating curriculum for adults with young children as part of the Children's Wisconsin LEAP (Learning Essentials about Parenting) program 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.
- Participation in Portage County Community Health Improvement Plan process in partnership with Portage County Health Department.
- A quarterly nutrition education series utilizing the Around the Table curriculum for adults as part of the Portage County treatment court program where adults learn about analyzing their eating habits, planning meals within a budget and incorporating more fruits and vegetables into their routines. The goal of this effort is to encourage long-term healthy eating behaviors.
- Shared leadership on the Giving Gardens Committee, a program of Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership (HPPP). The Giving Gardens program supports efforts to maintain educational community gardens and to increase food security and provide healthy meal options for economically disadvantaged citizens in Portage County.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- Met with the Portage Family Court Commissioner, Sheila Kessler, to discuss parenting training necessary in this county. Parents Forever (4-hour training) is what the judges can require for divorcing couples. Although this training is offered statewide via Zoom by UW-Extension, the closest in-person classes are in Marquette County. Many Portage County parents do not have the technology or knowledge to participate in Zoom meetings, plus in-



person is almost always more effective. I received permission and support to complete this training. My goal is to be offering this training monthly starting in March of 2024.

- 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 support.
- 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.