

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

## Agriculture

*Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent*



Farmers for Tomorrow Soil Health Field Day was held September 11, 2023. Twenty-five area farmers, crop consultants, Land and Water Conservation and NRCS staff were in attendance along with 36 high school students and their Ag instructors from Amherst and Almond-Bancroft schools. Attendees learned about soil health principles and the benefits of no-till farming and cover crops.



Farmers of Mill Creek and Farmers for Tomorrow DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Applications completed and submitted for continued funding for 2024.



Farmers of Mill Creek and Farmers for Tomorrow September newsletters published and sent to over 700 area farmers, landowners, crop consultants, and ag classrooms.



Serving on the planning committee for the New Wisconsin Water and Soil Health Conference coming December 7-8, 2023. This new event is a combination of the Wisconsin Cover Crop Conference and the Discovery Farms Conference. More information and registration go to <https://go.wisc.edu/wwash>.

### **Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County**



A Soil Health Field Day for farmers and agronomists in and around the Fourteen Mile Creek Watershed to better understand the steps to take to improve soil health on land they own or manage. This effort is designed to help farmers improve management for soil health to increase profitability and sustainability. – *Natasha Paris, Regional Crops Educator (Adams, Green Lake, Marquette & Waushara Counties)*



- A field study to determine the prevalence of a corn ear fungus, *fujarium graminearum*, that may impact the yield and feeding quality of corn was done with researcher Maxwell Chibuogwu UW Plant Pathologist.; data points were needed in Northern and Central Wisconsin to determine the distribution of this and other ear fungi. I worked to find cooperators and fields to sample. – *Matt Lippert, Wood County Extension Agriculture Agent*
- An educational resource booth at the Portage County Hmong Pre New Year Celebration, where the Portage County Hmong community learned about Extension agricultural and horticultural resources. This effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to address environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals in urban and suburban environments. – *Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator Wood & Marathon County Extension*
- A therapeutic horticulture class (Bring them inside!) for community members aged 55+ at the YMCA aquatic center in Mosinee, where participants learned how to apply IPM principles to indoor plants, reduce stress on plants reintroduced to indoor climates through light mitigation, and proper watering techniques while supporting lifelong learning, healthy wellbeing, and positive socialization. - *Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator Wood & Marathon County Extension*
- An event for farmers and conservation professionals, where participants learned about new developments in perennial crops, breeding and global diversity in cucumbers, and nitrogen research in potatoes. This effort was designed to bring farmers, stakeholders and researchers together to discuss ways to improve cropping systems in terms of diversity and resilience to better utilize resources in a changing climate with multiple resource concerns while still creating a sufficient food supply. - *Natasha Paris, Regional Crops Educator (Adams, Green Lake, Marquette & Waushara Counties)*

## Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

### *Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator*

- Katie has been busy getting herself situated in the county over the last month. She has been meeting with community partners and officials to understand the priorities and needs of the county and build those relationships for future projects. Two main focuses of work include supporting broadband access in the county through the development of the Portage County Broadband Plan and assisting in the development of a process to engage community members in siting large-scale solar development.

### **Additional Community Development work being conducted in Portage County**

- A nine-month program (Local Government Leadership Academy) offered statewide for elected officials, department heads, directors, managers, and other local government



leaders where they develop skills of effective leadership, including relationship-building, communication, decision-making, and vision. The purpose of this program is to help local government leaders develop professionally while also improving the overall function of their local government, thus increasing their capacity to provide quality services. -

*Elizabeth Mccrank, Community Development Educator*



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 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.
- Coordination with the Portage County Health Department to rebuild the HEAL coalition and FoodWise expressed intent to collaborate in the upcoming CHIP process.
- Teaching strength training sessions (StrongBodies) on the statewide Zoom call, where older adults also receive nutrition and health education. Participants engage in regular strength training exercises to improve muscle strength, balance, and flexibility so they can stay healthy and socially connected.
- Attended Institute on Aging Annual Colloquium showcasing the latest research and resources on positive aging, with Speakers, a Poster Session, and a Health & Resource Fair.
- Penny Schmitt was awarded the FoodWise Career Golden Award! She was nominated by her colleagues for her exemplary 19 years of service. Penny provides leadership in regional meetings of Nutrition Educators, acts as a mentor and teacher for other colleagues, presents her teaching techniques as an asset to others - and she is a model of patience, persistence and constant innovation. Congratulations Penny!





## Human Development and Relationships

*Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator*

- A 7-session course that helps adults of all ages to make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions in order to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored.
- 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 support.