



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

- Facilitation support to 4-H Ceramic Project volunteers, providing them with resources and strategies to make sure youth have authentic leadership roles in the ceramic project. The Ceramic Project provides youth the opportunity to explore their sparks while also creating a sense of belonging and engagement.
- Planning for a summer camp for 4-H members of Iowa, Portage, and Waupaca counties that provides an opportunity for youth to explore their SPARKS while developing a strong sense of BELONGING in the 4-H Program while developing strong relationships with caring adults and teen leaders.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent



Organized and moderated the On-Farm Data Collection for Agronomic and Water Quality Trials breakout session at the WI Water and Soil Health (WWASH) Conference December 7th.

- Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Program Update and Field Tours December 13th. Organized and provided educational content for a Field Day December 13th where 100 farmers, agribusiness professionals, youth, and area residents learned about conservation activities in the Mill Creek watershed, cover crop overseeding, roller crimping rye, and viewed fall overseeded cover crop fields. 54 of the 100 attendees were youth from 3 area High Schools.





- An on-farm, field-scale, research project to evaluate environmentally sustainable nitrogen application rates for grain corn grown on irrigated sandy soils in Central Wisconsin. A DATCP Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) project. Results from this research will improve our understanding of nitrogen cycling so farmers can optimize economic returns while improving efficiency of nitrogen fertilizer use resulting in more sustainable corn production on our sandy soils in central Wisconsin.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County



A study to learn about how much neonicotoid pesticides from seed treatments and from field applications leach into groundwater in areas of sandy soil. Results will help WDNR regulate this class of pesticides to protect water supplies statewide and agricultural producers to design farm management practices to mitigate pesticide impacts. - *Geoffrey Siemering, Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison, Department of Soil Science*

- In 2023 the Healthy Grown program enhanced its Innovative educational approach, expanded certification, and identified new research efforts which resulted in direct farmer engagement and on-farm BMP adoption outcomes. - *Deana Knuteson, Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison Department of Plant and Agroecosystem Sciences*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator


- Assisting in Portage County broadband planning meetings to develop the County Broadband Plan where participants identified underserved areas, explored methods for enhancing broadband access, and ways to strategically position the County for broadband deployment funding. This effort aims to increase the capacity for broadband expansion, improving the overall quality of life and economic opportunity for the county.



- 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 series of educational presentations for the Town of Grant to provide information about zoning, land use, solar overlay maps and rationale in identifying land areas where solar projects greater than 100 MW would be incompatible for adoption into their comprehensive plan. - *Karen Blaha, Outreach Specialist, Center for Land Use Education & Lynn Markham, Shoreland and Land Use Specialist, Center for Land Use Education*

 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

- Planning with partners in Clark, Marathon, Portage and Wood Counties to build a new platform that directly focuses on food access mapping for those with limited incomes. The goal of this effort is to provide current, reliable food access information for all community stakeholders in Central Wisconsin and the state.
- Collaborator in the Portage County CHIP process with the Portage County Health Department and other community partners to determine county priorities related to social determinants of health with a focus on equity.
- A nutrition education class for Head Start parents and students, where participants learned about making healthy food and beverage choices, feeding techniques, and snack/meal strategies to help families create healthier meals at home.



- A 5-week nutrition education series for sixth grade students at Jefferson Elementary School, where students learn about making healthy food and beverage choices, and about being physically active in order to help them to be healthier in school and at home.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for sixth grade students at McKinley Elementary School, where students learn about making healthy food and beverage choices, and about being physically active in order to help them to be healthier in school and at home.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- 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.