

*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*

- 4-H club officer training: Three teens from the Portage County 4-H teen leader's board helped plan and teach the 4-H Club Officer workshop. The in-person training was changed to a virtual training with less than 24 hours' notice due to hazardous weather conditions. Despite the last-minute change, we still had seventeen 2024 club officers attend the training and three 4-H teens leaders co-teach. The 4-H teen leaders voted to offer in-person training in February. Club officers learned the benefit of providing a welcoming environment, how to run a productive meeting, and the importance of their officer role. Teen leaders also facilitated small group discussions with club officers concentrating on their individual officer responsibilities. The leadership skills youth gain when they assume an officer role in their club is a valuable part of positive youth development.
- Five 4-H teens filled out applications and were interviewed for County 4-H Awards and/or Ambassador positions. Teens also interviewed for the Key Award and the Leader of Tomorrow Award.
- The AmeriCorps mission is "to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering." The Wisconsin 4-H Program has received funding to implement a statewide 4-H AmeriCorps program. Wisconsin 4-H has AmeriCorps serving in 29 counties across Wisconsin. AmeriCorps members will support the development of new and expanded relationships in counties, serving in partnership with local organizations to build capacity in communities. I am happy to announce that Brooklyn Butzin from Waupaca, currently attending UW Stevens Point, is the new 4-H AmeriCorps serving Portage County. 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. This half-time position of 900 hours starts in January 2024 and goes through August 2024.



### **Additional 4-H Positive Youth Development work being conducted in Portage County**

- A program for a Portage County 4-H club, where participants learned plant propagation skills. This effort is designed to support science literacy in youth. - *Janell Wehr, Wood & Marathon Counties Horticulture Educator*



- Development and submission of a grant between Portage, Waupaca, and Iowa counties 4-H to apply for a \$3,000 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*

- Held the first of four Private Pesticide Applicator Training sessions to prepare farmers for the Wisconsin pesticide application certification exam. This training educates farmers on best management practices and personal and environmental safety when using pesticides. Future training sessions are February 29, March 12, and March 28.
- Upcoming Ag-related programs - Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Grower Association and UW-Extension Grower Education Conference February 6-8 at Holiday Inn Stevens Point. Central Wisconsin Processing Crops Meeting at Hancock Ag Research Station March 6.
- Presented information on Teasel, a relatively new invasive weed in Portage County at the annual meeting of the Friends of Mill Creek Watershed.



## Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

*Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator*

- Planning and coordination for a series of seven focus groups for public officials and community leaders, local landowners and farmers, farm supply businesses, and youth where they will provide input on experiences and concerns around utility scale 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.



## Additional Natural Resources & Community Development work being conducted in Portage County

- A six-week virtual course (Building Belonging in Organizations) for nonprofit leaders where they learn about the relationship between organizational culture and individual belonging, the tools and processes for building belonging within their organizations, and strategies for overcoming resistance to change. The purpose of this effort is twofold: to increase the capacity of nonprofits to successfully meet the needs of communities and to increase organizational belonging that leads to greater civic participation. - *Noah Reif, Fond Du Lac County Community Resource Development Educator*
- Providing technical support to Wisconsin businesses before and after they transition to worker owned cooperatives in order to retain job and businesses in our communities. - *Kristin Forde, Extension Cooperative Development Specialist*



A collaborative planning effort between Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards (PACRS) to gather all citizen led water protection and restoration groups in the greater Wisconsin River basin area. The goal of this effort is to increase collaboration amongst the groups, identify goals and initiatives for improving water quality, and assessing community needs. - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator*



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, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist*



*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 nutrition education class for Jefferson Elementary School families, where parents learned about the importance of providing children with healthy foods to choose from. Families also received healthy snack/meal strategies and created a snack together to encourage them to make healthier meals at home.
- A nutrition education class in partnership with Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, where parents and teens learn about nutrition labels, making healthy food and beverage choices, and snack/meal strategies to help families create healthier meals at home.
- Working 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.



## 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.



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
PORTAGE COUNTY

# January 2024 Activity Report

---

## Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- A 6-session wellness series (WeCOPE) for childcare providers where they learned different strategies that support awareness of mind-body connection. The goal of this effort is to offer skills to decrease stress and increase positive emotions of participants. - *Jackie Carattini, Wood County Extension Human Development & Relationships Educator*
- A 7-session course, Planning AHEAD 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. - *Jackie Carattini, Wood County Extension Human Development & Relationships Educator*