



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

- Working with a 4-H AmeriCorps member to provide 4-H outreach opportunities, where youth who are not yet 4-H members will experience a 4-H project or event, or to expand capacity of the 4-H program and better serve the youth of Portage County.
- 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.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Helped organize, facilitate, and provided educational content for the February kickoff meeting of the Farmers for Tomorrow watershed project. 35 area farmers and agribusiness professionals learned about using cover crops to manage weeds, grazing cattle, doing on-farm research, and the local NOPP field-scale on-farm research project looking at nitrogen rates for irrigated grain corn grown on loamy sand soils.



- Served as moderator for the 2024 University of Wisconsin Extension and Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Growers Association Grower Education conference February 6 - 8.
- Attended and participated in the annual Producer-Led Watershed Protection workshop.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A seminar for hop growers where participants learned current crop production and marketing strategies to increase profitability and sustainability. - *Jerry Clark, Chippewa County Agriculture Educator, Crops & Soils*



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- A series of meetings with regional and community partners including Centergy, North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Portage County Planning and Zoning, Breaking Point Solutions, and Extension Broadband staff where broadband issues seen across the county and central Wisconsin region were discussed and opportunities for partnerships and broadband expansion were explored. This effort aims to strategically place the county in a position to receive future broadband implementation funding to bring broadband access to currently under or unserved areas, further enhancing the quality of life for Portage County residents.
- 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 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*



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*

- Planning for a series of nine regional 1-day, in-person workshops for community officials, leaders, and broadband committee volunteers in collaboration with the Wisconsin Counties Association, Public Service Commission/WI Broadband Office, WI Economic Development Corporation, and more. The goal of this effort is for the participants to gain knowledge and skills in broadband permitting requirements, engagement and endorsement, and engage in peer learning so they can build public-private partnerships that meet their community's needs, increasing economic opportunity and quality of life for all community members. - *Jessica Beckendorf Extension Broadband Partnerships Specialist*



- 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*

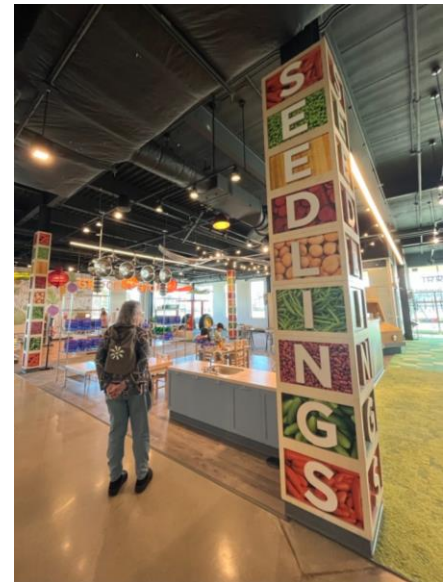


Denotes educational or planning efforts that work toward improving water quality in Portage County, Central Wisconsin, and the State as whole. While these efforts are highlighted in this report, there is more work being done by Extension to address water quality concerns outside of what is here. For 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 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd grade classrooms at Jefferson Elementary School, where students learn about the importance of eating five food groups, try new fruits and vegetables, and learn how food and physical activity can help them now and in the future. This effort was designed to make healthy eating a positive experience which will help students make healthier food choices in the future.
- Tour of Food & Farm Exploration Center to learn about their educational offerings and discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd grade classrooms at McKinley Elementary School, where students learn about the importance of eating five food groups, try new fruits and vegetables, and learn how food and physical activity can help them now and in the future. This





effort was designed to make healthy eating a positive experience which will help students make healthier food choices in the future.

- A 12-week series of StrongBodies strength training sessions in partnership with Berkshire (age-qualified housing), 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.
- 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 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.

Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- A series of four 1 hour, discussion-based sessions where participants learn strategies to improve their credit and decrease their debt. The goal of the series is to help improve the financial knowledge and confidence of participants, increase their ability to access and read their credit reports, and provide them with strategies to improve their credit. - *Jonathon Ferguson Extension Financial Capability/Learning Resource Specialist*
- A 6- session wellness series (WeCOPE) for child care 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*