



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

- A camp counselor training for summer 4-H camp for youth counselors, where they participated in welcoming activities, team building, picking the camp theme, and leadership exercises under the leadership of the county 4-H educators. The purpose of the training is to engage young people in leadership roles while learning about team building and mentoring strategies they can apply while being a camp counselor.
- 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.
- A county-wide 4-H Demonstration and Speaking Event was held where 4-H youth practiced their communication skills; learning to talk in front of an audience and sharpening the life skills that helped them to be better communicators in the future.



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

- A 4-week virtual series for youth (Youth on the Rise) in which they explored the world of bread baking. The series had two tracks: quick breads and yeast breads. During each session, youth learned basic skills and techniques and baked along with the instructor. - *Laura Huber, Wood County Extension 4-H Program Educator*

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- 2024 Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo, a Significant Planning/Development Activity

Abstract: Planning the April 24, 2024, Annual Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo. The goal of this event is to encourage profitable farming by building resiliency, diversifying farming operations, reducing inputs, and increasing return on investment.

Farmers, Crop Consultants, and local stakeholders will learn about best-management practices they can use to take advantage of what nature has to offer and increase self-sufficiency on the



farm. Topics include regenerative management, managed grazing, cover and companion crops and no-till farming. They will also explore specific barriers central Wisconsin farmers are experiencing when adopting best management practices through discussion with fellow farmers who have implemented these practices.



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.

2024 NOPP Field Map (top of page is north)

Replication	Treatment	Treatment w. Envita
Rep 1	101 (3) 160 N	107 (3) 160 N
	102 (5) 220 N	108 (5) 220 N
	103 (2) 130 N	109 (2) 130 N
	104 (1) 100 N	110 (1) 100 N
	105 (4) 190 N	111 (4) 190 N
Rep 2	106 (6) 190 no cover	112 (6) 190 no cover
	201 (3) 160 N	207 (3) 160 N
	202 (6) 190 no cover	208 (6) 190 no cover
	203 (2) 130 N	209 (2) 130 N
	204 (5) 220 N	210 (5) 220 N
Rep 3	205 (4) 190 N	211 (4) 190 N
	206 (1) 100 N	212 (1) 100 N
	301 (5) 220 N	307 (5) 220 N
	302 (6) 190 no cover	308 (6) 190 no cover
	303 (1) 100 N	309 (1) 100 N
Rep 4	304 (4) 190 N	310 (4) 190 N
	305 (3) 160 N	311 (3) 160 N
	306 (2) 130 N	312 (2) 130 N
	401 (6) 190 no cover	407 (6) 190 no cover
	402 (5) 220 N	408 (5) 220 N
	403 (4) 190 N	409 (4) 190 N
	404 (2) 130 N	410 (2) 130 N
	405 (1) 100 N	411 (1) 100 N
	406 (3) 160 N	412 (3) 160 N

- A meeting of Crops & Soils field staff and UW-Madison College of Ag & Life Sciences Specialists to develop more intentional coordination around on-farm research related to cropping systems in Wisconsin. The purpose of this effort is to carry out the Wisconsin Idea by connecting Extension staff across the state to the research being conducted by faculty and bringing those ideas to farms where they can be applied and tried in order to increase agricultural sustainability and profitability across the state.



An event for farmers and agribusiness professionals where participants learned about latest research and best management practice updates in growing processing crops in sandy soils. The purpose of this effort is to improve sustainability and efficiency in vegetable production for a safe and sustainable food supply.



A facilitated discussion for Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri, a producer-led watershed protection group, and UW-Madison and UW-Extension Researchers where participants discussed current and future research in vegetable and potato production systems. The goal of this effort was for participants to identify current research, discuss gaps or support needed for on-farm research, and collaborate on new and innovative practices to protect and improve water quality. This discussion provided an opportunity for producer-led group members to connect with researchers and identify potential projects and support for on farm research.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- In coordination with the UW Agribusiness Club and Cranberry Learning Inc, a case study was developed for undergrad Ag Econ students to practice solving a real-world return on investment problem. Cranberry grower judges were identified to volunteer, and cranberry industry partners



(excavator, drainage experts, irrigation experts, an engineering company, banks, and plant propagation experts) were recruited to provide pricing and support to the students. This will give students opportunities to interact with a variety of professions crucial to the cranberry industry, to develop familiarity with the cranberry industry, and will encourage development of the skills needed to successfully run a small agricultural business. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*



A GDD Harmonization Task Force is organized to coordinate SpargDD, CFWDD, and CranDD across researchers, growers, and temperature sensor companies so that growing degree days can be used consistently to determine progression through egg hatch of critical cranberry insect pests. This will allow growers to time applications more precisely, allowing fewer applications to get equal-or-better control of pests. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*

- A Virtual Brown Bag Lunch was held for cranberry growers, drawing 57 attendees to learn about winter/spring flooding impacts on plant health, transpiration during dormancy, and Worker Protection & Safety programs. The first topic will allow growers to avoid yield losses due to prolonged flooding under high temperatures, the second will allow growers to avoid yield losses due to dry conditions when plants are dormant, and the third topic enhances a two-way street between growers and DATCP, making it easier for growers to follow regulations and keep workers safe. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A Wisconsin Cranberry Research and Education Foundation meeting was held which reviewed operating budgets, cranberry bed renovations, and the construction of a new shop of the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station, along with weather station and safety policy development. This ongoing work ensures a productive and long-term profitable Cranberry Research Station which will enable UW researchers to do quality work to benefit growers' production practices. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A framework was developed to establish cooperative on-farm research for outreach specialists and others within the Crops & Soils program. This will result in easier access to on-farm trial data for growers and encourage a culture of grower research participation. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*



A program (Romaine Calm and Garden On Session 2) for Mosinee residents, where participants learned how to map out a garden for crop rotation. This effort is designed to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination - *Janell Wehr, Wood & Marathon County, Horticulture Educator*



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- Organizing two community conversations in Portage County on March 27th and 28th focused on utility-scale solar development, targeting residents and stakeholders for a comprehensive dialogue on the benefits and impacts of solar projects. This initiative aims to enhance local planning and community involvement, ensuring solar developments offer tangible advantages to the communities involved.
- Planning a Portage County Housing Summit for early summer 2024, in partnership with WISCAP, CAP Services, and UW-Stevens Point, aimed at educating attendees on diverse housing models and setting priorities for affordable homeownership and rental solutions. This collaborative effort seeks to unite stakeholders to formulate practical housing strategies and action plans to help address the shortage of workforce housing.
- 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.

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

- 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 presentation for Department of Natural Resources staff and another presentation for attendees at the Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Conference, where DNR staff and attendees learned about a social indicator survey that was conducted to better understand producer's awareness levels, attitudes, constraints, capacity and behavior towards water quality and conservation practices. The goal of this effort was to inform DNR staff, conservation practitioners and educators with information for planning, implementing, and evaluating conservation practices based on the needs of agricultural producers. Another goal of this effort was to share the impact that social science efforts can have on informing and implementing conservation management projects and practices. - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist*



A regional event for members of watershed protection groups (farming and non-farming) and conservation practitioners, where attendees got to connect, collaborate, and have candid conversations about water quality needs. The goal of this event was to strengthen relationships in the greater Wisconsin River watershed basin, increase collaboration, identify goals and initiatives for improving water quality, and assessing community needs. - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator*



A facilitated discussion for producers and conservation professionals in the Springbrook and Upper Eau Claire River watersheds where participants will learn about the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program. The goal of this meeting is for producers to identify conservation related concerns, local stakeholders, and engagement/commitment in order to determine if forming a producer-led watershed protection group is in the best interest of the environment and community members. - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator, Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist, & Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Extension Water Resource 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

- Shared leadership in the Giving Gardens committee of HPPP (Hunger & Poverty Prevention Partnership), where emphasis is placed on promoting and supporting efforts to maintain community gardens, improve food security, and provide educational programming in Portage County.
- A 5-week nutrition education series (Discover MyPlate) for 1st grade classrooms at McKinley Elementary School, and 1st and 3rd grade classrooms at Jefferson Elementary School where students will learn about MyPlate, the five food groups, and try new fruits and vegetables. The goal of the series is for students to learn about being physically active and help them make healthy choices in school and at home.



- 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.
- 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.



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.

Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- A 3-hour online class for mandated parents in a legal court case for divorce, placement change, child support or paternity, where they learn about the effects of family transitions on children and how parents can minimize problems for their children through cooperative co-parenting strategies. When divorced parents can cooperate or have a business-like approach to co-parenting, their children are far more likely to do better and not experience lasting negative effects of divorce. - *Missy Bablick, Barron County Human Development & Relationships Educator & Luisa Gerasimo, Dunn County Human Development and Relationships Educator*



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

March 2024 Activity Report

- A Spanish language offering of Parents Forever, a co-parenting class for adults in transition, where they learned skills to prioritize the parent-child relationship and better communicate with their co-parent. The program is designed to increase child well-being and reduce parental conflict. - *Missy Bablick, Barron County Human Development & Relationships Educator & Luisa Gerasimo, Dunn County Human Development and Relationships Educator*