



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

- The Portage County AmeriCorps member and the 4-H Youth Development Educator adapted and delivered a robotic program in two classroom sessions for nine youth in 4th grade at St. Bronislava school. The goal of the program is for youth to increase their skills in interpreting two-dimensional drawings to create three-dimensional models and to gain practical, hands-on experience with an emphasis on problem solving through estimating and measuring distance, time, and speed. When the classroom teacher verbally asked for a review from the students after the 2-day program was complete the response was all positive, including the teachers. “The kids loved it!! Thanks so much for the fun experience.”

AmeriCorps members are tasked to support the development of new and expanded relationships in counties, serving in partnership with local organizations to build capacity in communities, start new 4-H clubs, and recruit additional volunteers to grow Wisconsin 4-H, expand access, and reach new audiences.

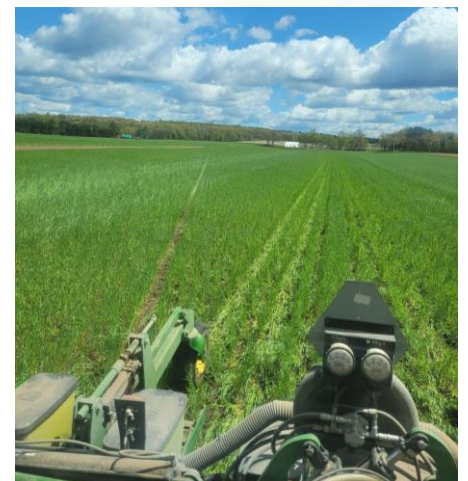
- A series of monthly camp counselor trainings for summer 4-H camp for youth counselors, where they participated in welcoming activities, team building, picking the camp theme, and leadership exercises under the leadership of the county 4-H educators. The counselors will be in the high school range and the campers are from grades 3-8. 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. Total Reach: 13 Camp Counselors.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent



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. Corn Planted 5-11-24 into 22-inch-tall green rye.

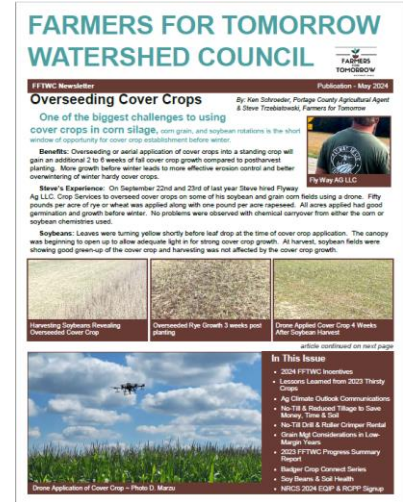




The Farmers for Tomorrow River (FFT) Watershed Newsletter is a tool I use to expand my educational outreach to area farmers, agribusinesses, and other stakeholders within the Tomorrow River watershed spanning eastern Portage County, south into very northern Waushara County, and into southwestern Waupaca County. I author articles and serve as editor and coordinator. The newsletter is published and sent to 325 farmers, agribusiness professionals, and area residents three times throughout the year focusing on soil and water conservation opportunities for farmers.



May, spring edition of the FFT Newsletter published and sent out. Content included information on 2024 cost-share opportunities for conservation practices, Overseeding Cover Crops (Ken Schroeder), Agronomic Lessons Learned from 2023, Consider No-Till and Reduced Tillage (Ken Schroeder), Grain Management Considerations in Low-Margin Years, 2023 Farmers for Tomorrow Project Summary Report, A Soybean and Soil Health Research Opportunity, and Growing Season Resources.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County



An outreach booth for local Hmong residents, where participants learned about Extension resources to increase awareness and knowledge of resources to decrease environmental contamination and pollution due to overuse of horticulture chemicals. - *Janelle Wehr, Wood & Marathon County Horticulture Educator & Ka Zoua Thao, Wood County Bilingual (HMong) Community Health Worker*

- A program for adults over 55 where participants learned techniques for saving seeds. The goal of the effort was to teach seed saving strategies while providing a learning and social opportunity. - *Janelle Wehr, Wood & Marathon County Horticulture Educator*
- Planning for a workshop for Hmong growers/farmers in collaboration with Women's Community, Hmong American Center and USDA-FSA/NRCS. The goal is to introduce Government farm programs and to introduce beginning recordkeeping/cash farmland leasing to Hmong farmers/growers, so that Hmong farmer are aware of farm programs and services and use them to strengthen their farm business. - *Gaonou Thao, Extension Farm Management Outreach Specialist & Janelle Wehr, Wood & Marathon County Horticulture Educator*
- Assistance was provided in planting new hybrids at the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station, which experience will inform future outreach efforts. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A Virtual Brown Bag was held featuring crop stage and insect updates with Ocean



Spray's Senior Agricultural Scientist, fruit quality and PAC measurements with USDA's Shinya Ikeda, and the EPA Bulletins Live Two system for complying with the Endangered Species Act. Total Reach: 25 - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*

- Direct grower questions were answered regarding high soil sulfur levels concurrent with high soil pH—due to several growers experiencing these results this year, additional outreach work will be developed. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A Wisconsin Cranberry Research and Education Foundation meeting was held to continue progress on the development of the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A Women Leadership in Agriculture panel was held with Under Secretary Alexis Taylor, bringing together several cranberry leaders as well as grazing, dairy, potato, and vegetable leaders for a round table discussion informing trade/export issues. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- Serving as a member of the founding board for the Central Wisconsin Community Land Trust start-up, where the goal is to establish a community land trust that ensures long-term housing affordability and stability in Portage County.
- Planning a Portage County Housing Summit for June 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.
- A presentation to the Portage County Unit of the Wisconsin Towns Association, where elected town officials learned about affordable housing issues and how they can address needs in their community. They also learned about an upcoming Portage County Housing Summit where these topics would be further discussed. The purpose of this presentation was to educate town officials on how they can encourage housing development. Total Reach: 25 elected officials.
- A one-day workshop for community broadband leaders, economic development organizations, public and private permitting agencies, and internet service providers, where participants learned about broadband permitting requirements, engagement and endorsement of BEAD



projects, and engaged in peer learning through case studies so they can build effective public-private partnerships that meet their community's broadband needs, increasing economic opportunity and quality of life for all community members.

Additional Community, Natural Resources & Economic 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 effective leadership skills, 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. Total Reach: 24 Local government officials and/or staff members. - *Elizabeth Mccrank, Extension Community Leadership Development Specialist, Amy Ebert, Waupaca County Community Development Educator, Benoy Jacob, Extension Community Development Institute Director*



A hands on learning station utilizing the Enviroscape Model for 4th grade students from Roosevelt Elementary School, where students learned about watersheds and land use impacts to them. Through this activity students are able to visualize what a watershed is and how everyday land uses impact the watershed itself and to water resources in the watershed. Students also are able to demonstrate the impacts of best management practices to minimize potential impacts. Total Reach: 70 4th grade students 10 Teacher and Adult Chaperones - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater 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 5-week nutrition education series for 1st grade classrooms at McKinley 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.
- 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 for 1st and 3rd grade classrooms at Almond 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 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.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- A six-module course for social workers, case managers, and community agency staff where they learn about financial competency skills such as goal setting, budgeting, building credit and paying off debts, strategies for saving money, and how to engage their clients in money management discussions. The goal of this effort is to build their knowledge and confidence when engaging clients in financial conversations. Total Reach: 132 professionals who talk about finances.
- A coaching 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.
- An online 14-module program ("Money Matters") for adults, where they learn about credit scores and reports, making a spending plan, what to do when you can't pay your bills, and identifying financial strengths. The goal is for participants to set and achieve their financial goals, save for



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their future, build good credit and pay off debts, and maintain positive relationships with financial institutions.

- A 6-session 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, those with negative rental records and those new to renting are able to increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public support.