



Portage County

Portage County

UW-Extension

1462 Strongs Avenue

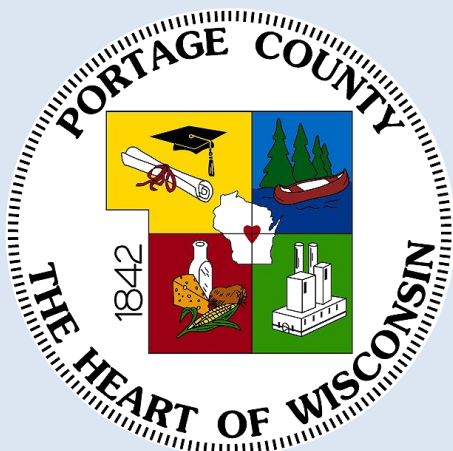
Stevens Point, WI 54481

715-346-1316


[www.portage.uwex.edu](http://www.portage.uwex.edu)

# 2017

## Annual Report



**We teach, learn, lead  
and serve, connecting  
people with the  
University of Wisconsin,  
and engaging with them  
in transforming lives  
and communities.**

University of Wisconsin-Extension

**Jason Hausler**

Area Extension Director  
Portage, Wood, Marathon & Clark Counties

715-533-8006  
jason.hausler@ces.uwex.edu






Portage County

**Lisa Henriksen**

Support Staff

715-346-1462  
lisa.henriksen@ces.uwex.edu

Portage County

**Denise Rocha**

Support Staff

715-346-1316  
denise.rocha@ces.uwex.edu

**Portage County UW-Extension**  
**Portage County Annex Building, 2nd Floor**  
**1462 Strongs Avenue, Stevens Point, WI 54481**

**Walk-in Services & Items Available**

**Plat Books**

- 2017 = \$40
- 2014 = \$20

**Soil Testing**

- Garden & Lawn = \$16/sample
- Animal Food Plot = \$16/sample
- Farm/Field = \$9/sample

**Pesticide Applicator Manuals & Testing**

- Independent Study = \$30/manuals

**Farm Record Books**

- \$6/book

**Plant Identification**

- Free if done in-house
- \$25 or less if sent to lab

**Plant Disease Diagnostics**

- Free if done in-house
- \$25 if sent to lab

**Insect Identification**

- Free in-house or lab

**Pressure Canner Testing**

- Free



**Our Mission: To bring University of Wisconsin unbiased, research-based educational information to the residents of Portage County.**



Portage County



## Ken Schroeder

Agricultural Agent

715-346-1318

ken.schroeder@ces.uwex.edu

**The Agricultural Agent provides educational services and programs to farmers and homeowners in:**

- **Field and Vegetable Crop Production**
- **Integrated Pest Management**
- **Insect, Weed, Disease Identification**
- **Farm Financial Management**
- **Nutrient Management**
- **Pesticide Applicator Training**
- **Home Horticulture**
- **Master Gardener Volunteer Advisor**
- **General Farm Information**

Watershed Protection Grant and \$1,650 in additional support from Wood County Land and Water Conservation funds.

**Farmers of Mill Creek, 2017 By the Numbers:**

- 500 acres no-till planting cost-shared
- 400 acres single species cover crops cost-shared
- 120 acres multi-species cover crops cost-shared
- 11 acres cover crop variety demo plots planted
- On-farm research plots (4 locations)
- Hosted 3 educational field days

Ken and the Farmers of Mill Creek applied for and received \$33,075 to continue their efforts in 2018.

### **Farmers for Tomorrow/Waupaca River Watershed Project**

This is a new project just getting under way in 2017 focusing on elevated nitrates in the groundwater in the Tomorrow/Waupaca River watershed. After several planning meetings, with a small group of farmers within the watershed along with Ken and Portage County Land and Water Conservation we applied for and received a 2018 DATCP Producer-Led Watershed Protection grant totaling \$37,120 to educate farmers on conservation practices with potential to reduce groundwater nitrate levels in the Tomorrow/Waupaca River watershed. This funding will provide assistance to farmers willing to experiment with cover crops and no-till practices in a time when profit margins are slim to nonexistent.

There is always a cost to trying new practices – seed for cover crops that won't likely be harvested and potential yield losses for new no-tillers as they perfect the process on their land. It also provides money to host educational field days and support farmer attendance at the Wisconsin Cover Crops Conference the end of February as well as cost-share money for manure nutrient analysis and a feed pad leachate study to better understand the effects of feed leachate on soil and water quality. Thus the Farmers for Tomorrow River Watershed Council was formed.

### **Farmer Led Watershed Projects**

Ken Schroeder's roles with the **Farmers of Mill Creek** and **Farmers for Tomorrow** watershed projects include grant writing, coordinating field days and providing educational content for the field days, providing one-on-one consulting for farmers interested in cover crops and no-till planting, and assisting the farmers in fulfilling their goals of improving water quality while maintain or improving farm profitability.

### **Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Project**

In 2017, thirty farmers in the Mill Creek Watershed installed conservation practices on their farms such as no-till planting, cover crop variety demonstration plots, cover crop planting, waterway buffer strips or hosted an on-farm research project site looking at cover crop effects on soil temperature and soil moisture. These conservation practices covered more than 1,400 acres. Three field days throughout the year attracted approximately 190 area farmers and local residents to learn about conservation practices that will ensure clean water and healthy soils for future generations while maintaining or improving farm profitability.

\$17,950 in cost-share funds were provided to farmers as part of this project with \$16,300 provided by a Wisconsin DATCP Producer-Led



Farm Safety Programming

Ken Schroeder is taking a multi-faceted approach to program development. In 2017 in cooperation with the Biadasz family, Ken organized and hosted a manure pit safety seminar bringing several UW-Madison safety specialists, a University of Iowa safety specialists, and safety equipment representatives to build awareness of the safety concerns around stored manure handling. Then in summer our Forage Council Field Day focused on farm safety. Ken brought in two local fire departments to talk about grain bin safety and demonstrate their grain bin rescue equipment, two local implement dealers to talk about farm equipment safety, and a representative from a local safety equipment company to talk about manure gas monitoring equipment.

Farm Safety Outcomes:

- Sixty eight attendees at the manure pit safety seminar included dairy, beef, and hog farmers, manure haulers, and Ag industry and insurance industry representatives learned about the hazards of handling stored manure and how to reduce the risks.
- Think Safety article encouraging a safety first attitude reached approximately 3,000 farm households in central Wisconsin.

This is an ongoing program focus. Ken has begun working with the Wisconsin Potato and Vegetable Grower Association along with Cheryl Skjolaas, UW Ag Safety Specialist on safety programming for the potato and vegetable industry. Additionally Ken, the Biadasz Family and the UW Ag Safety Specialist are planning an on-farm safety program to be held in mid to late July 2018.

Portage County Master Gardener Volunteers

The Master Gardener Program in Portage Co. started in 1991. Over 317 people have been trained since that time, and there are currently 36 certified Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) for 2018.



Volunteer Service Hours in 2017

• Youth Education	247.2 hours
• Adult Education	1,267.5 hours
• Hands on Work	1,310.5 hours
• <u>Continuing Education</u>	<u>752.0 hours</u>
• <b>Total Hours</b>	<b>3,577.2 hours</b>

PCMGVs worked in cooperation with the **YMCA** at their Giving Garden to plant, maintain, and harvest produce from 26 raised beds located at the YMCA. More than 800 pounds of produce was distributed to students, their families and elderly and disabled citizens through the **Aging and Disability Resource Center**.

PCMGVs host a booth at the **Stevens Point Farmers Market** every Saturday from June through September educating the public by answering questions regarding; plant and weed, insect and plant disease identification and general horticulture information.

About \$2,000 in donations collected at this year’s **Garden Parade** was given to **Backpacks for Hope** to provide supplemental food through the **Boys and Girls Club of Portage County** to school-age children who might otherwise go hungry on the weekends when they do not receive meals at school. Volunteers fill backpacks with enough food for four meals and an additional snack for each child for a weekend.

PCMGVs worked in collaboration with **FoodWise, Giving Gardens** and the **Hunger and Poverty Prevention Partnership (HPPP)** to build, develop, and plant NEW Giving Garden raised beds at the **Interfaith Food Pantry** in Plover. This garden allowed food pantry recipients to assist with the gardens and see how fresh local food donated to the pantry is grown. All food grown was donated and distributed through Interfaith Food Pantry.

MGV outreach in Portage County not included above; Garden Dreams—Community Education, Boston School Forest, Rosholt Fair, Golden Sands Home & Garden Show, all Portage County Libraries, Portage County Healthcare Center and many public flower beds.





Portage County



## Nathan Sandwick

Community Development Educator

715-346-1319

nathan.sandwick@ces.uwex.edu

**The Community Development Educator provides a variety of educational programs and resources to local government officials, community organizations, and businesses including:**

- **Organizational Development**
  - Strategic Planning
  - Board Development Training
  - Team Building
- **Community Development**
  - Comprehensive Planning Education
  - Citizen Participation Methods
  - Economic Development Education
  - Natural Resources Education
- **Local Government Education**
  - Training for Public Officials and Staff
  - Public Policy Decision Support

## Broadband Education

In 2017 Nathan continued to work with members of the Task Force for Broadband in Portage County and the UW-River Falls Survey Research Center staff to complete a study of high speed internet needs, and to share the findings with various audiences. He reported final results to the Portage County Board of Supervisors, UW-Extension colleagues, the Portage County unit of the Wisconsin Towns Association, town boards and meetings of local associations as requested. Copies of the report were mailed to local town officials along with information about grant opportunities.

Working relationships formed over the course of this effort have led to the successful award of a Broadband Expansion Grant in 2016, and another in 2017. These grants awarded amounted to \$150,000 and \$170,000 in 2016 and 2017 respectively. It was estimated that these public funds would be met with private investment of \$350,000 and \$579,524, respectively, by Tomorrow Valley Communications to complete these projects which have extended fiber to households in unserved areas of the Towns of Dewey, Hull and Sharon. Private-public partnerships and letters of support based on a shared understanding of the need and opportunities contributed to success in this competitive grant program. In addition to these towns, there are now four more towns in underserved areas of the county whose elected officials have begun to discuss and pursue broadband development opportunities to address needs for high speed internet service in their area.

With interested partners Nathan continues to support the successful formation and continuation of a new informal Community Area Net-

work (CAN) that convenes monthly. Based on those discussions, key staff from local municipalities have worked to develop an enterprise model that may enable municipalities to expand upon and share telecommunications infrastructure in partnership with other anchor institutions.

## Community Energy Resource Development

Prior to 2017 Nathan coordinated an introductory workshop on Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing. In communities where local ordinances allow PACE financing, it can enable investment in energy efficiency improvements. In 2017 he arranged for county officials to meet members of the Economic Development and Capital Improvements Plan Committee to learn about PACE directly from two of the key people – one from Wisconsin Counties Association and one from Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation – who have been working together in communities throughout the state to establish the Wisconsin PACE program. He also introduced information about PACE financing to interested groups and individuals, and shared relevant data indicating the variability of energy consumption across various types of residential and commercial buildings in our climate zone. The Portage County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution enabling PACE financing, which made Portage County the 22nd to opt into the Wisconsin PACE program. Nathan has now become a local point of contact for those who wish to learn more about the financing tool and how it may now serve property owners in Portage County.



## Leading the 2017 Portage County LIFE Report Sub-Committee on Environment, Energy and Transportation

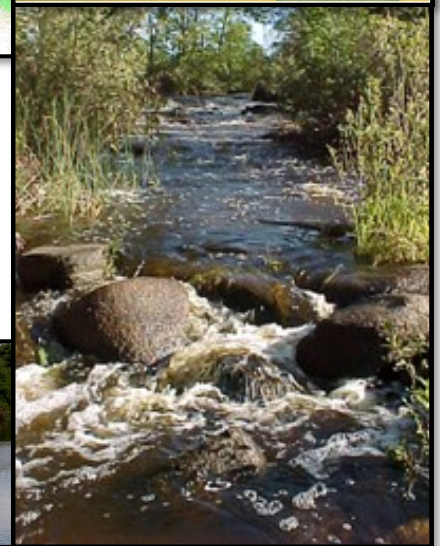


The Local Indicators For Excellence (LIFE) Report is a collaborative assessment orchestrated by the Portage County United Way every five years. This collaborative approach to community needs assessment helps bring local issues and opportunities to light. Nathan served as a steering committee member and a subcommittee chair. In his role as subcommittee chair, he convened knowledgeable contributors to compile data found in the Environment, Energy and Transportation section of the report. He also encouraged inclusion of a new section on Community Engagement and compiled much of the data highlighted in that section. Through this report community members can learn more about Portage County and how they can help improve our community by engaging in the four calls-to-action identified in the report.

### Community Visioning for Parks

Survey responses have come in from a few hundred citizens as one component of Nathan's effort to support members of the Portage County Parks Commission and managerial staff of the county Parks Department who recognized a genuine need for public input to inform their sense of direction about the future of Portage County Parks and related trail systems. To help address that need, Nathan organized a small group of stakeholders and led them through the development and deployment of a public interest survey, drawing from the examples of two similar surveys. Nathan then tailored the survey to these stakeholders' understanding of what questions were relevant and actionable, as identified in discussions that he led. Responses obtained indicate respondents' attitudes regarding parks; which characteristics about parks system are rated as satisfactory and important by various park users; and what kinds of improvements they would like to see. By design, the survey also generated substantial interest in a public forum about survey findings and vision ideas for the parks and trails.

Based on comments from members of the parks commission, such efforts have never before been done to actively seek a broad base of public input to help establish a sense of direction specifically for the future of the county park system. They anticipate that the input will help them and the Department to shape plans, management strategies, and future investment priorities. Portage County officials, staff, and citizens engaged in this effort gained experience with a citizen engagement effort combining a survey and a public forum designed to obtain useful input.







Portage County



## Sherry Daniels

Family Living Educator

715-346-1321

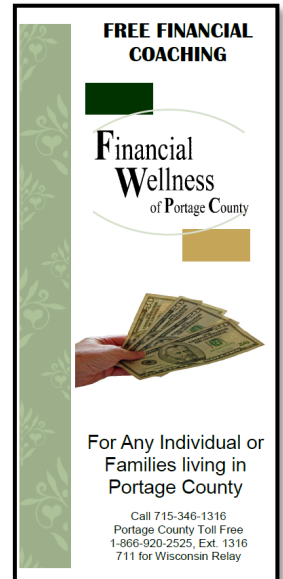
sherry.daniels@ces.uwex.edu

**The Family Living Educator offers a variety of educational opportunities that strengthens both families and communities by teaching family members to:**

- **Become more effective parents**
- **Manage family finances**
- **Strengthen family relationships**
- **Make healthy choices about diet, exercise and food safety**
- **Maintain independence and economic security for older adults**
- **Food preservation**
- **Mindfulness**

## Financial Wellness of Portage County

Financial Wellness of Portage County (FWPC) coaches are community volunteers trained by Sherry to work with families. The coaches' help clients make spending plans, review and correct credit reports, and help people set short/long term goals. Those helped are better able to reach their financial goals through improving their financial literacy. They share the information they learn from their financial coach with friends and family members. Overall the community improves its financial literacy and is better able to thrive in the future. Clients are referred to the program through a variety of community partners, including CAP Services, Work N' Wheels, Operation Bootstrap, financial institutions, professional counselors, and area churches. In 2017 thirty six individuals and families were matched with our volunteer coaches.



## Strong Bodies

The StrongBodies™/StrongWomen™ program offers a means to help people achieve better health and fitness through delivery of a national evidenced-based strength training program targeted to midlife and older adults. While research shows that regular exercise provides many benefits to mature adults, only 7% of middle-aged and older adults exercise daily. Strong Bodies has been demonstrated to build strength, balance and flexibility and also helps to improve bone density and prevents falls. In July Sherry Daniels became trained to be a Strong Bodies trainer. Sherry and the ADRC offered the first Strong Bones training to their clientele in September 2017. The class started out with nine participants and by the end of the twelve weeks had sixteen participants. A few weeks into the program the participants started to see improvements in their strength and balance. One participant noted she could now stand on one leg and put on her sock; she could not do that before. Another participant started the class with a walking cane and at post-test no longer needed the cane.

The pre/post assessments, designed to measure strength, flexibility, and overall fitness, showed that 100% of participants improved in at least one of the areas tested. Program evaluations showed that participants enjoyed the program, felt stronger because of it, and were interested in continuing. Some quotes from the participants: "Really enjoyed learning with others – lots of laughs." "Thank you for helping us meet our goals and beyond." "Sherry has helped me get moving after retirement." As a result of this program, participants are more likely to be able to stay independent in their homes longer and continue to be active members of the community.



## Peer to Peer Financial Coaching at University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

There is a growing concern over the large amount of college student debt upon graduation. There is also a lack of financial knowledge among graduating college students. Sherry trains college students interested in finance and family living to do peer to peer financial coaching on campus. They have become a recognized student association at UW-Stevens Point, called the Financial Literacy Association. In addition to meeting one-on-one with their peers to discuss student loans and other financial concerns they do group presentations at dorm meetings, other college groups, and at the Dreyfus Student Center. In 2017 twelve student financial coaches were trained. Capacity is built in this program by training past coaches to train new coaches.



In evaluating the training program the following quotes were received from students: "This training helped me personally and it is exciting to be able to help others" and "This training provided real experiences; every student should take this training." They go on to help other students improve their knowledge of student loans and other financial topics. This helps to improve financial literacy on campus and after graduation.

## Portage County Association for Home and Community Education (HCE)

Sherry serves as advisor for Portage County. HCE has a long and rich history, its work goes back to the extension home demonstration agents who worked in 17 counties to teach women how to use wheat, sugar and meat substitutes during World War I. Throughout major changes in technology, lifestyles and the roles of women in society, HCE has brought high quality educational offerings to its members and communities with the support of UW-Extension Family Living Programs. HCE projects impacting Portage County families include:



### Wisconsin Bookworms™ - Reading Project

- HCE members read to 260 three and four year olds each month of the school year.
- Each month every child is given a copy of the book to keep; Portage County children have received over 18,500 books as a result of this literacy project.
- HCE has received grants from Amherst Lioness Club, Community Mission Fund of Portage County, Education Mission Fund of Portage County, Saint Bronislava Social Concerns Committee, Sentry Insurance, Stevens Point Area Co-op, Stevens Point Area Retired Teachers Association, Stevens Point Junior Women's Club, Thrivent Financial Services, Women's Fund of Portage County, HCE Clubs, and individual donations to help fund book purchases.



### Children's Comfort Pillows

- Members sew pillowcases for travel size pillows with fabric donated by members; pillows are purchased with HCE funds and individual/club donations.
- Pillows are donated to the Ronald McDonald House in Marshfield and are given to infants/children undergoing cancer and other treatments.
- Over 1,000 pillows have been distributed.







## Jill Hicks

FoodWise Program Administrator

715-346-1664

jill.hicks@ces.uwex.edu

**FoodWise is a UW-Extension nutrition education program that helps families and individuals with limited resource to:**

- Choose healthful diets
- Purchase and prepare healthy foods
- Practice safe food handling techniques
- Increase food security by using food dollars wisely
- Promote self-sufficiency in providing healthy foods and managing financial resources

**FoodWise serves primarily youth, parents of children and seniors in a variety of locations throughout Portage County.**



## Penny Schmitt

FoodWise Nutrition Educator

715-343-6254

penny.schmitt@ces.uwex.edu



## Mary Higley

FoodWise Nutrition Educator

715-343-6262

mary.higley@ces.uwex.edu



## Joanna Lickel

FoodWise Support Staff

715-343-6227

joanna.lickel@ces.uwex.edu



# SNAP-ED WORKS 2017

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education



**Portage  
County**

## The Challenge



Almost 1 in 9 Wisconsin households face hunger/food insecurity



2 in 3 Wisconsin adults are overweight or obese.



1 in 7 participants in the Women Infants and Children (WIC) program aged 2-4 years old are obese.



**\$3.1 Billion =**  
Cost of obesity in Wisconsin

## The Solution

### EXPOSE



children to new fruits and vegetables and why they are important.

### TEACH



parents how to plan, buy, and prepare healthy food.

### EMPOWER



families with limited resources to choose healthful diets and become more food secure by spending food dollars wisely.

### SUPPORT



communities in making the healthy choice the easy choice where people live, learn, work, and play.

## Program Reach - Promoting Health & Nutrition through Partnership



**1,047** participants in Portage County

Collaborated with **4** community health coalitions

Supported **35** partners



Education delivered to individuals at **119** settings.



## Healthy Intentions, Healthy Behaviors

### Changes in knowledge and intent:

**63%**

of all youth and adult participants stated intent to eat more servings of fruits and vegetables following the lessons.



**47%**

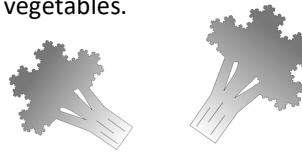
of all adult participants intend to use at least one food resource management strategy. (budgeting)



### Changes in knowledge and intent:

**62%**

of parents reported that their child is eating more vegetables.



**25%**

of teachers report that students are eating more fruits and vegetables in school snacks.



In 2017, FoodWise received a Garden Grant and engaged with Giving Gardens and Master Gardeners to add two new community gardens to the community located at Interfaith Food Pantry and McKinley School





Portage County



## Connie Creighton

4-H Youth Development Educator

715-346-1320

connie.creighton@ces.uwex.edu

**The 4-H Youth Development Agent assists youth in their efforts to become capable, self reliant, contributing adults through:**

- 4-H Club Programs
- Leadership Development
- Prevention Education
- Development of Life Skills
- Community Service and Awareness
- Career Education

## 4-H Youth Development

Portage County is home to 13, 4-H clubs. Through those clubs 4-H engaged 378 youth and 103 adults in 2017 .

These individuals participated in three to twelve 4-H club meetings held by each different 4-H Club.

Older youth gain character, competence, confidence, communication, connection, caring, and community service through participation in 4-H activities.

- Through active engagement in 4-H our older adolescents take on leadership roles in the 4-H Teen Leaders Association. In 2017 Portage County had 107 4-H Youth Leaders.
- 4-H teens worked with Connie and other volunteers to provide three overnight camping experiences for a combined total of 36 youth, who reported learning about teamwork, listening to others, kindness, friendship, and protecting nature.

Portage County 4-H had over 49 members participating in various market animal projects including; Beef, Dairy, Swine, and Sheep.

Small animal projects were also a hit with 146 participating with their

Chickens, Ducks, Rabbits, Turkeys and more. 4-H youth and their animals have the opportunity to participate in both the Amherst and Rosholt Fairs as well as the Wisconsin State Fair.

Beyond Fairs, we are proud this year to acknowledge one of our 4-H Dog project participants who was selected to compete the Westminster Dog Show!

4-H is also more than agriculture and animals. In 2017 Connie spearheaded the first Robotics project. Through a grant from the UW-Extension Northcentral Region, 8 computers and 8 Lego robotic kits were purchased. The youth involved are learning about computer coding while having a lot of fun.

Also in 2017, 24 4-H members were able to hone their speaking and presentation skills by participating in the Portage County Speaking & Demonstration contest. Members also participated in the annual Portage County 4-H Clothing Revue where they modeled handmade articles of clothing. Some exhibitors also demonstrated their knowledge of fabrics and styles by modeling apparel purchased from department stores.

Not to forget our younger 4H youth, Portage County 4-H hosted a Cloverbud Explorer Day Camp that allowed 18 members in grades K-4 to make new friends, work on camp crafts, play games and enjoy an outdoor dinner together with their families.

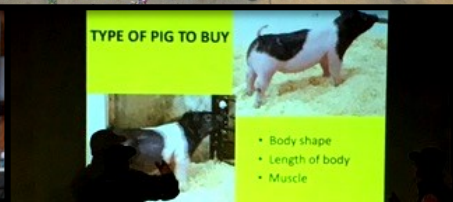
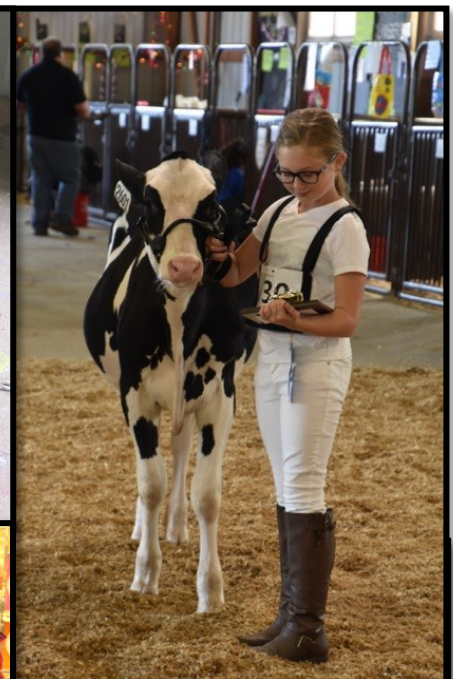
4-H youth and adults participated in a variety of volunteer activities; highway clean-up throughout the county, senior home visits, food pantry collection, educational workshops for youth, Salvation Army bell-ringing, blanket-making for the women's shelter, creating cards and baskets for the military, and much more.

## Youth Gardens

In 2017 Portage County received a grant for \$2,700 to implement summer gardens at 4 different locations throughout the county. Youth from not only the Portage County 4-H program, but also the Boys & Girls Club were invited to try their hand at gardening. Participants learned about plants, insects and gardening as well as the importance of fresh vegetables in a healthy diet. 198 participants participated in the summer garden program throughout the 9 week period.







An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please do so as early as possible prior to the program or activity so that proper arrangements can be made. Requests are kept confidential.