



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 involves youth in project-based education. Through project learning, youth can explore their interests (“Sparks”) while creating a sense of belonging and engagement. Project workshops provide volunteer-led experience-based learning. The last few months 4-H volunteers held a cake decorating workshop (22 registered for the event), two sewing workshops (9 enrolled), a shooting sports air-rifle workshop (11 attended), a ceramic workshop (8 registered), and a dog training workshop (4 registered).

The 4-H Program Educator, Creighton, worked with two 4-H project leaders to plan, facilitate, and host two county-wide sewing project meetings for beginner sewers. This is the fourth year the sewing project series is being held. At the project meetings Creighton supported project leaders, provided materials, and demonstrated project specific techniques.

- The AmeriCorps member, Brooklyn, and Creighton developed and planned a 10-week summer series of educational programs, held at two rural Boys & Girl Clubs (B&GC) in Portage County, where youth Grade 3-7 participate in hands-on STEM and Cultural Arts projects. This effort is designed to expand the reach of 4-H, introduce youth to 4-H, and provide an opportunity where youth can explore their interests (“Sparks”) while creating a sense of engagement.

The first week of the series concentrated on setting up and establishing two AeroGardens at each of the B&GC sites, followed by a discussion on how hydroponic plant growth works. The second week we conducted an experiment on surface tension using milk, food coloring, and dish soap (June is Dairy Month). Each site had 30-45 youth attending.

In the second week, at the Rosholt B&GC, we started a robotic program with the older youth (12 youth). The goal of the youth robotic program in Rosholt is to help members interpret 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.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent



Farmers of Mill Creek Lunch and Learn 6-25-24. A workshop for farmers where producers learned effective management strategies to respond to excessive and persistent rain that has prevented normal planting and development of crops. Farmers learned about alternative forages, providing adequate feed for livestock, crop insurance rules, resilience to climate change and conservation practices to protect soil and water. This program was developed in response to a problem that developed suddenly and required an immediate local response.



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. Nitrogen treatments applied Jun 12, 2024. Corn at V8 growth stage June 26 (see photo).





Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County



A farm tour and panel discussion for undergraduate students of agriculture, where participants learned about developments in technology and sustainability in the potato and vegetable industry. The purpose of this event is to improve the ability of future agricultural professionals to respond to emerging needs in the industry regarding technology and sustainability. Total Reach: 24 - *Natasha Paris, Extension Regional Crops Educator*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- A Portage County Housing Summit for local government decision makers and housing practitioners, where attendees learned about different housing models and strategies and brainstormed housing priorities for Portage County, so that stakeholders can begin to address the shortage of workforce and affordable housing. Total Reach: 50 summit attendees.
- Development of public engagement guide for conducting focus groups and community conversations on utility-scale solar development. These guides can be used by Extension Educators in planning public engagement around solar development. This work is part of a national project (Community Centered Solar Development) Total Reach: Approximately 90-100 program participants.
- Planning for a fall Strategic Doing workshop focused on enhancing entrepreneurship and placemaking efforts in three counties: Marathon, Portage and Wood. This regional collaboration will bring together several stakeholders to identify actionable ways to move this work forward.
- 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.

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 booth of drinking water testing and safety for residents of Portage County, where residents were able to learn about how to have their drinking water tested and to learn about drinking water safety to order to. Total Reach: 137 Portage County Residents - 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

- 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 series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) in partnership with Berkshire living facility, where older adults learn best practices and learn nutrition and health education. Participants engage in regular strength training exercises to improve strength, balance, and flexibility so they can stay healthy and socially connected.
- Provided backbone support to the senior food box (Stockbox) program in partnership with the ADRC and Portage County Housing Authority during a program transition put in place by the Hunger Task Force.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for first grade summer school classrooms at McKinley Elementary School, where students 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.

Additional Health & Well Being 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 health opportunities and to collect data about needs within the Hmong community. - *Ka Zoua Thao, Wood County Bilingual (HMong) Community Health Worker*

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- 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 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.