



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

July 2024 Activity Report

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

Summer 4-H Camp

- A three-day overnight camp experience for 4-H members in grades 3-8, where youth participated in STEM activities, nature projects, team building and made connections with other youth while under the guidance of teen counselors. One purpose of the camp is to also engage older youth in leadership roles while all participants practice team building, connecting with others, decision making, and increasing personal responsibility. Total Reach: 75 children grades 3-8; 11 older youth counselors grades 9 and above; 14 adult volunteers.



Portage County 4-H AmeriCorps Summer Series

- The Portage County 4-H 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. In this program 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.

In the third & fourth week (week of July 1st and 7th) of the summer program we invited Portage County beekeepers in as guest presenters. The guest speakers talked about the important role bees play in our ecosystem. At the Junction City site, we had an extra week of programming due to the 4th of July. This week we created cultural art stations involving foam, bead work, and origami. The fifth week, July 15, we had youth make a circuit that turned a light on. This was challenging with this grade level and the number of youth attending. The majority of the youth were able to complete the challenge. An average of 54 youth participate each week.

4-H Summer Robotic Program

- The Portage County AmeriCorps volunteer and the 4-H Youth Development Educator adapted and delivered a robotic program to 4th - 6 grade youth enrolled in the summer Boys & Girls Club at Rosholt The goal of the program is for youth to increase their skill 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.

At the Rosholt B&GC site we began the Robotic program on June 24th with an average of 10 older youth per program. The program ended 15th of July with 6 youth still engaged in programming their robots. On the 29th of July we will start a new robotics program at the Plover B&GC site. 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 by building their own robots and through estimating and measuring distance, time and speed.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- An Extension Central Newsletter article for farmers, crop consultants, and agribusiness professionals where they learned about crediting on-farm nutrients to reduce costly crop production inputs in a low-margin year.

I wrote an article entitled "Credit Your On-Farm Nutrients to Reduce Crop Production Costs in 2024" published in the Spring edition of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Central Newsletter (circulation about 7,500). Farmers, crop consultants, and agribusiness professionals learned about available on-farm nutrients from livestock manure, preceding legume crops, possible carryover from their 2023 fertilizer applications, and soil organic matter mineralization. This article focused on the value of these nutrient sources to replace purchased fertilizers for the current cropping season. Readers learned about key opportunities to reduce crop production inputs in a low-margin year. Read the article: <https://go.wisc.edu/36j58ep> p. 6-7.



- An event at the Hancock Agricultural Research Station July 11 for farmers and agribusiness professionals to showcase the research being done in potato and other vegetables by the Extension Specialist team. The purpose of this effort is to show how agricultural research and Extension work directly benefits the industry by providing timely and relevant research findings to improve sustainability and profitability in the potato and vegetable industry.





- An on-farm research project to evaluate the effects of calcium and boron on soybean yield of soybeans grown on sandy loam soils in Central Wisconsin. Results from this research will improve our understanding of the interactions of calcium and boron on soybean yields with the hopes of increasing soybean production efficiency on our sandy soils. A randomized complete block design was used with 4 boron rates (0, 2, 4, 6 lbs./acre) and 4 calcium rates (0, 40, 80, 120 lbs./acre) and replicated 4 times. Soil samples taken July 3rd, at 0-6", 6-12", and 12-18".



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A workshop for the MTC Student Success Team, where participants learned growing techniques for indoor container plants while also learning how plants can improve learning outcomes passively. This effort was designed to increase awareness and knowledge of environmentally-sound gardening practices that simultaneously provide physical, social and emotional benefits of gardening. Total Reach: 17 - *Janelle Wehr, Wood & Marathon County Horticulture Educator*
- A Badger Talks speech was given in Janesville in support of the UW Alumni Association and their Taste of Wisconsin program for UW's 175th Anniversary. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A fungicide 80% bloom application was made in support of the Plant Pathology program, to determine products, rates, and use patterns that may support Wisconsin growers in protecting cranberries from disease while reducing the risk of resistance. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A scouting day ride-along was planned and put into action, for meeting 5 new growers as well as observing field conditions across 5 operations. Total Reach: 12 - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A task group was begun to gain consensus on in-bloom, through-bloom, and out-of-bloom calculations for the Wisconsin cranberry industry. This will allow smoother communication across researchers, crop scouts, and growers regarding application timings. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- Planning for a Fall workshop focused on Entrepreneurship and Placemaking efforts in Marathon, Portage, and Wood Counties. The goal, under the Strategic Doing framework, is to bring together stakeholders from across the region in order to establish action-based work groups to support, enhance, and grow efforts towards placemaking and an entrepreneurial ecosystem within the region.
- Planning for a series of four regional rural housing summits for local officials, developers, and residents in collaboration with state and local housing advocates. The goal is to build a broader shared understanding of diverse housing issues in rural communities, to compile and share success stories and common challenges, and identify innovative solutions to the rural housing shortage, so that rural communities are empowered to take the lead in addressing their unique housing challenges with support from a statewide cohort of partners. Total Reach: Estimated 400 attendees total, plus agency and development partners. Resources will be posted for broader access after each summit.
- Serving as a member of the founding board for the Portage County 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.
- 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).

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

- Educational assistance for the Town of Grant (Portage Co.) to help them in their revision of their solar overlay map and rationale identifying land areas where the town feels solar projects greater than 100 MW are and are not compatible to adopt as part of their comprehensive plan. - *Diane Mayerfeld, Extension Outreach Specialist, Sherrie Gruder Extension Sustainable Design & Energy Specialist, & Sharon Lezberg, Dane County Community Development Educator*



A presentation and facilitated conversation with lakefront property owners and members of lake protection groups in the 14 Mile Watershed, where attendees learned about results from a social indicator survey that was conducted with farmers in the 10- and 14- Mile Watersheds. Through the presentation and facilitated conversation, participants discovered



the value of social science efforts in watershed restoration projects and became more informed about the strategies their farming neighbors are implementing to help improve water quality. During the facilitated conversation, participants discussed what they learned, what was surprising and challenging, and what applications or actions the data helped trigger for their groups. Total Reach: 12 lakefront property owners and lake protection group members 1 County Land & Water specialist. - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist*



A study to better determine times of travel for groundwater in the central sands. This study will also check for correlation between land use and nitrate concentration in streams in the central sands. These results can be used by county conservationists and citizens to better understand the source areas of their groundwater and the length of time needed to see changes in water quality with changes in land use. *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator, David Hart, Extension Wisconsin Sea Grant Program Leader & Maureen Muldoon, Extension Hydrogeologist*

- Workshop for planning and zoning staff, elected officials, zoning board members, and interested community members where they learn about the role of the zoning board so that they can make more informed decisions for their community. Total Reach: 140 participants for three workshops in three counties. - *Karen Blaha, Outreach Specialist & Lynn Markham, Shoreland and Land Use 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 12-week series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) in partnership with Portage County ADRC, 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.



- 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 nutrition education series for 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, before entering kindergarten.
- A quarterly nutrition education series in Portage County for adults with young children as part of the Children's Wisconsin LEAP (Learning Essentials about Parenting) program where they learn about incorporating healthy eating habits into the family routine, including family meals and eating more fruits and vegetables. The goal of this effort is to encourage healthy eating behaviors at home.



Additional Health & Well Being work being conducted in Portage County

- Two workshops for the county's Health & Human Services Leadership and Public Health teams, where participants learn about their individual and team strengths as well as growth opportunities through the Gallup StrengthsFinder assessment. Through this effort, participants learn to capitalize on their strengths to increase engagement which has been shown to improve overall health outcomes. In addition, participants learn more about their team's strengths which aids in building trust and understanding. Total Reach: 35 middle management team members attended the workshop. - *Selena Freimark, St. Croix County, Health and Well-Being Educator, & Katie Livernash, Portage County Community Development educator*

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.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

July 2024 Activity Report

- 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, 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.

Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- This interactive 6-week program helps adults cope with stress & difficult times. WeCOPE has been shown to reduce stress and depression, increase positive affect, and improve healthy behaviors. Managing life's challenges in healthy ways allows participants to take better care of themselves and others. The course and all materials are provided FREE of charge at this time due to generous funding from UW-Madison, SAMSHA ROTA and Resilient Farms and Families grant funding. Total Reach: 19 participants - *Margo Dieck, Eau Claire County Health and Well-Being Educator & Luisa Gerasimo, Dunn County Human Development and Relationships Educator*