



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

August 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

- We held two Cloverbud/Explorer 4-H Day Camps in August at the Boston School of Forest for youth in grades K-3. Both 4-H and non-4-H youth were invited to attend. We had fourteen campers, six teen counselors, and five adult volunteers participate in the first day camp while twelve campers, three teen counselors, and five adult volunteers participated in the second camp. Four non-4H youth registered and three attended the day camps. This program provides leadership opportunities where our teen leaders teach, lead, and mentor our youngest 4-H members at camp.



Campers participated in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) activity of boat making and racing, making hovercrafts, and slime. Campers also made salt art, dinosaurs and sea creatures from pool noodles, and learned camp songs. The goal of day camps is to provide hands-on activities that engage and challenge our young people while providing an environment that encourages a sense of belonging.



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent



An informative research-based discussion on water quality in the central sands region of Wisconsin for interested stakeholders where they learned about the components of water quality and the challenges and successes associated with it.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A Cranberry Summer Field Day was held, attracting 830+ growers, to share best practices in cranberry production as well as connect growers, researchers, and industry partners. Mini-Clinics on in season stress detection, genetics, and biofertilizers were presented with UW as well as marsh tours with research inputs. Total Reach: 380 - *Allison Jonjak*,



Cranberry Outreach Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension; Amaya Atucha, Fruit Crop Production Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension & Leslie Holland, Fruit Crops Pathologist, UW-Madison Division of Extension

- Field observations were made at a 2023-2024 cycle Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Project to assess upright development and growth under 4 nitrogen timing regimens. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A field visit ride-along with Ocean Spray's Senior Agricultural Scientist was undertaken to develop grower relationships and understand the roles handler scientists play for growers. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A meeting was held to transition Pesticide Applicator Training to the new Pesticide Applicator Training Coordinator. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A tour of the Warrens Cold Storage facility was conducted to understand alternative markets for cranberry growers. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- A troubleshooting visit for potential Upright Die Back was conducted and samples were collected for the UW Plant Pathology Lab. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension & Brian Hudelson, Extension Plant Disease Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- Needs Assessments are being conducted in conjunction with field visits in all growing regions of the state. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*
- Soil samples for a Vilas County Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Project were collected and submitted for analysis to determine the soil and tissue outcomes of and adjusted nitrogen application strategy. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- Partnered with CAP Services, Inc. and the UW Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies to develop a grant proposal to fund and build CAP Services' housing repairs programming. A goal of this project is to improve the accessibility and timeliness of their services in order to improve housing conditions for low to moderate income individuals and improve health equity in housing.



August 2024 Activity Report

- A series of meetings with local non-profit agencies, local elected officials, and municipal and county staff members where they discussed the possible creation of a Portage County Housing Taskforce, including feasibility, logistics, and focus of a workgroup. The goal is to coordinate housing efforts and support action across Portage County so that housing access and affordability is improved.
- Co-hosting a "Solar Power Hour", an informational session for homeowners and business owners to learn about the benefits and potential roadblocks of installing solar panels on their home and small business. This session is through a partnership with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association for the Grow Solar Central Wisconsin program, which is an education, consumer protection, and group buy program. Through this effort, access is expanded to renewable energy for home and business owners.
- 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 workgroups 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.

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 McCrack, Extension Community Leadership Development Specialist, Amy Ebert, Waupaca County Community Development Educator, Benoy Jacob, Extension Community Development Institute Director*



August 2024 Activity Report



A field day for farmers and non-farmers in and around the Big Roche-A-Cri watershed, where attendees learned about an on-farm research project that was conducted by Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri and Petenwell & Castle Rock Stewards group members and Extension and UW-Madison researchers. Through this field day, attendees learned about the dynamics of nitrate leaching and examined the feasibility and impact of interseeding cover crops in a potato system. Attendees also learned ways in which on-farm research trials will help potato growers improve their practices to minimize nitrate losses. Total Reach: 25 attendees including agency staff, non-farming community members, producers, and agronomists - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & - Natasha Paris, Extension Regional Crops Educator*



A facilitated discussion with Farmers of the Roche-A-Cri, a producer-led watershed protection group, where the group discussed new collaboration opportunities and educational programming efforts. Through this discussion, group members identified priority areas for education programming and research that will serve the community and natural resources needs of the Big Roche-A-Cri and Little Roche-A-Cri watersheds. Total Reach: 8 producer-led group members - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & - Natasha Paris, Extension Regional Crops Educator*



A presentation for county and state partners, where the audience learned about producer-led watershed protection group in Central Wisconsin and the value of utilizing social science efforts in conservation management. Through this effort, county and state partners explored ways to collaborate with producer-led watershed protection groups to help improve water quality, and discussed ways in which social science efforts can be utilized to inform and measure progress of watershed management plans. Total Reach: Estimated 40 attendees that include county Land & Water staff and DNR staff - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator*



A presentation for attendees of the 2024 National Wildlife Federation Growing Outreach Conference, where 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 attendees about ways social science efforts can be incorporated into watershed management planning. Another goal of this effort was to inform attendees about planning, implementing, and evaluation conservation practices based on the needs of stakeholders within a watershed. Total Reach: Approximately 70 attendees - *Anna James, Extension Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach 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

- FoodWise staff in the Central Wisconsin Region are planning for the development of a Farmers Market Collaborative to bring market managers and key leaders in the region together and build a support system around markets in rural communities where resources and capacity is limited.
- 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 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.
- A nutrition education series for justice-involved individuals in Portage County, where the participants engage in conversation and interactive activities that build a healthy connection to food, self, and community.



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.



August 2024 Activity Report

- 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.
- A series of strength training sessions (StrongBodies) in partnership with Portage County ADRC, where older adults also receive education. Participants engage in regular strength training exercises to improve muscle strength, balance, and flexibility so they can stay healthy and socially connected.
- A two 1-hour series of financial training for Drug Court Participants where they learn about credit, budgeting, and saving money. This helps them to pay off court/jail fees and to better manage their finances in the future.