



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

- Currently wrapping up the 2024 fair season, we have been working one-on-one and in committee meetings with leaders, parents, and youth to evaluate what worked well this year and identify challenges.

Highlights of the Fair Season

- **4-H Teen Leader Activity Station:** We held a 4-H teen leader-manned activity station. At the county fair, youth of any age could make art with foam, including door knockers, pool noodle creatures, and pipe cleaner bracelets. The station was extremely successful, with high engagement from youth and teens. Due to its popularity, we ran out of supplies and plan to continue the station next year.
- **Carcass Contest:** Held the first Thursday after the Rosholt Fair, this year's contest included livestock from four processing plants: Becks in Oshkosh, Niemuth's Steak and Chop Shop in Waupaca, Pond Hill in Wittenberg, and Butcher Block in Stevens Point. An educational program at the Annex followed, discussing the results and teaching both youth and adults what retailers look for in livestock products.
- **State Events Participation:** Youth showcased their animals at state events like the 4-H State Dog Show and State Fair.

Upcoming Programs

- **October:**
 - Three sewing workshops: one via Zoom and two in person.
 - Hmong UPLIFT Program: 4-H youth and adults will conduct a pumpkin carving program, providing an opportunity to expand Extension programming outreach.
- **November:**
 - Leaders Banquet: Recognizing 4-H leaders for their accomplishments.
 - 4-H Award Program: A youth-directed program recognizing young people's achievements.
 - Fall Forum: A state 4-H program offering workshops and hands-on activities for 4-H teen and adult leaders.



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Farmers for Tomorrow Fall Field Day. A field day for farmers where producers learned about the benefits and importance of soil health and how to build soil health, observed first-hand soil structure, root growth, and worm channels in an on-farm soil pit. Additionally, farmers learned about the benefits of using cover crops and grazing cattle as components of building soil health.



- Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin Field Day. Assisted with a field day held on the Guth Farm focused on the above and below ground benefits of multi-species cover crops. Attendees learned how cover crops can reduce soil erosion and compaction, suppress weeds, and increase soil fertility. They saw firsthand the butterflies, bees, and other pollinators that benefit from using cover crops following a cash crop.



- September edition of the FFT Newsletter published and sent out. Content included, dealing with standing water in the fields, research report on the corn nitrogen rate study on irrigated loamy sand in Portage County (Ken Schroeder), cover crop options after small grains and processing crops, managing soil compaction at planting and harvest, using prairie strips for pollinators and to



capture soil and nutrients, and upcoming educational conference opportunities.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A one-day workshop for farmers, agronomists, and crop consultants, where participants learned about the latest research in optimizing weed management through the use of improved technology, precision agriculture, and conservation practices. The purpose of this effort is to help increase the resiliency of cropping systems in Wisconsin and manage weeds effectively while minimizing resistance and increasing profitability and sustainability in agriculture. Total Reach: 89 participants who affect 220,200 acres. - *Natasha Paris, Extension Regional Crops Educator; Daniel Smith, Extension Nutrient and Pest Management Program and Jordyn Sattler, Lafayette County Crops and Soils Educator*
 - An event for college students of agronomy and precision agriculture where participants learned about the harvest operations of potatoes and sweet corn as well as disease management in potatoes. The purpose of this effort was to educate preservice agribusiness professionals about specialty crops and how to sustainably manage disease in potatoes through prevention and technology. Total Reach: 36 preservice agribusiness professionals. - *Natasha Paris, Extension Regional Crops Educator*
 - The Wisconsin Cranberry Research and Education Foundation board met to discuss upcoming needs for the Wisconsin Cranberry Research Station, including a subcommittee meeting on researcher safety. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension & Jed Colquhoun, UW Madison Department of Horticulture Professor*
-  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*
- 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*



Horticulture Wrap-Up 2024

Denise Rocha, Support Staff & Certified Master Gardener

- Horticulture activity is starting to wrap up for the 2024 season, the following are the statistics.
 - 48 Soil samples were submitted for testing; 30 homeowners' gardens or lawns, 13 farm samples, and 5 for deer food plots.
 - 38 Horticulture inquiries were received; 11 insect identification, 27 plant or plant disease identification. Of these, 28 were sent to the Plant Disease Diagnostic Clinic or the Insect Diagnostic Lab at UW-Madison

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- 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.
- A report to Portage County on the Community Centered Solar Development Engagement Project which took place from Winter 2023 - Spring 2024. The report was provided to all who engaged in this process, and outlines the engagement process, key findings from the project, and leverage points for local governments and communities. Through this effort, communities are educated about the legal parameters of large-scale solar development and the processes by which they can be involved.
- 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.
- 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.



- 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.
- An educational update for Portage County elected officials and staff on the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. Through this effort, attending Portage County leaders were made clear on next steps that should be performed to be ready for upcoming broadband grant applications put forth by internet service providers. Total Reach: 3 Portage County staff members and elected officials.

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

- Solar Contract Basics for WI Landowners was presented in Marshfield at the AgCountry Farm Credit regional headquarters on August 21, 2024; in Madison, WI at the Farm Bureau Federation Headquarters on August 22, 2024 and virtually on August 26, 2024. More than 75 farmers and other landowners, as well as local elected officials, learned about renewable energy siting and engagement, common contract terms in solar lease agreements, the potential risks in solar lease agreements, and how to negotiate solar lease agreements mitigating or eliminating the risks while providing economic value to the farmer/rural landowner. Total Reach: More than 75 farmers and rural landowners, as well as local elected officials. - *Bill Oemichen, Extension Local Government Law Educator; Kelly Wilfert, Extension Farm Law Outreach Specialist; Diane Mayerfeld, Extension Outreach Specialist and Sherrie Gruder Extension Sustainable Design & Energy Specialist*
- A video series called “Fielding Questions” highlighting successes and challenges farmers are facing while implementing soil health practices in Northeastern Wisconsin. This ongoing effort was designed to support peer-to-peer learning amongst farmers by featuring local producers sharing how they’re implementing soil health practices. Total Reach: Facebook reach was 5,000 to 13,000 people, with full video plays (on Facebook and Youtube combined) ranging from 90-205 on 5-minute videos. - *Maranda Miller, Extension Regional Natural Resources Educator*




A collaborative art project between a UW student artist and water professional to bring the message of sustainable farming practices and water quality to public audiences. Total Reach: Because this artwork is managed by another group (Water@UW-Madison) we cannot do not have the ability to track engagement. We will share these paintings directly in a few weeks on Upper Fox-Wolf’s and Between the Lakes Demonstration Farms Networks Facebook pages, and we will pay for boosting so that it reaches wider audiences to spread the messages of conservation agriculture tactics further. So currently, we cannot say how many people that will reach. - *Maranda Miller, Extension Regional Natural Resources Educator*



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*

 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 Berkshire 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.
- Collaboration between Extension colleagues across the state to create a Community of Practice for farmers market leadership in Central Wisconsin. This project will also offer support and leadership to a USDA grant project serving local farmers markets.
- 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.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- 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. Total Reach: 27 senior adults
- An all day coaching training with college students to help them prepare to be good financial coaches for their peers. Total Reach: 13 college students for a financial coaching workshop.



- A 2 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. Total Reach: 6 Drug Court Participants
- 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 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

- A four-hour, in-person workshop where early childhood educators learned about fostering child inquiry and designing lessons that align with children's interests. Participants also learned how to document learning progress and align their practices with Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. The impact of this session is to enhance teaching practices in early childhood education by creating responsive learning environments that meet state standards. Total Reach: 10 Early Childhood Educators - *Alicia Utke-Becher, Waupaca County Human Development & Relationships Educator*

Upcoming Events

- RentReady Training on Wednesday, October 30 at 4:30 in the Annex, conference rooms 1 & 2.