



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

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent



A hands-on field day for high school students enrolled in the Agricultural course at Almond-Bancroft High School, where participants discussed and learned about soil and water resources in Portage County, WI. Through this effort students understand the properties of soil and soil profiles, and how different tillage and conservation farming practices can improve soil health. Students also learned about water contamination and different water quality data collection techniques. Total Reach: 6 students 1 Teacher 3 Agricultural producers.

- A presentation entitled [Addressing the Challenges of Agriculture in an Economical and Environmentally Sustainable Way](#). Twenty participants learned about advances in agriculture that support environmental sustainability including precision agriculture, genetic advancements, improved crop production methods, and Farmer-Led projects that encourage on-farm research and adoption of soil and water conservation practices.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County



A Virtual Brown Bag Lunch was held for cranberry growers for the purpose of better understanding (1) water and nutrient uptake into fruit during the growing season and (2) the 2024 set of priorities identified at the Research Round Table. These will enable growers to manage nutrients and water efficiently, and to help understand research priorities for funding opportunities. Total Reach: 28 - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension & Amaya Atucha, Fruit Crop Production Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension*



To understand the top short term and long term research priorities of cranberry growers in Wisconsin, a Research Round Table was held in which 57 participants joined to discuss top needs in -soil & water quality -horticulture -plant pathology -entomology -general management (business management as well as equipment needs) in addition to long term collaborative & strategic needs. A 7-page document was produced to assist researchers in proposing desirable research, and growers in allocating research funding according to priorities. Total Reach: 57 in person attendees plus 13 recipients of the produced document, and 27



people observing the virtual recap. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension, Amaya Atucha, Fruit Crop Production Specialist, UW-Madison Division of Extension & Jed Colquhoun, UW Madison Department of Horticulture Professor*

- Responding to a grower call, a field visit was conducted to review possible causes of abiotic stress and consider seeking analysis from campus specialists. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist UW-Madison Division of Extension*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- A series of meetings and ongoing collaboration with Portage County elected officials and staff on the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program. Through this effort, Portage County leaders were made clear on and are carrying out next steps to be prepared for upcoming broadband grant applications put forth by internet service providers.
- 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 on the local project team for the Portage County Safe Streets and Roads for All Action Plan creation, whereas this effort seeks to engage community members through demonstration and education activities as well as through public input during the planning process. The goal of this plan is to eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries through the development of a comprehensive safety action plan.
- Partnered with CAP Services, Inc. and the UW Center for Community and Non-Profit 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.
- 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 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 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. - *David Hart, Extension Wisconsin Sea Grant Program Leader, Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator, 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

- FoodWise provided support to the Stevens Point Winter Market to successfully implement an EBT program at the market to increase local food access for Portage County residents. This includes providing support in accessing funding for a Double Dollars program that provides a match of up to \$20 of EBT tokens to shoppers who use their EBT card at the market. This initiative supports local businesses and provides increased access to fresh food to those utilizing FoodShare benefits.
- Planning for an updated emergency food resource guide and food pantry participant/provider survey in collaboration with food





providers and community organizations. The goal is to provide an updated, accurate copy of the food resource guide to community members and organizations and to use the pantry survey to learn if the needs of pantry guests are being met.

- 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 5-week nutrition education series for 5th grade classrooms at McKinley and Jefferson Elementary School, where students will 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 interactive presentation for professionals who conduct home visits, providing services to children Birth-3 with special needs and their families, where participants learned the 7 drug categories and their effects on the body, signs of impairment, and common hiding places so that they can better recognize when drugs or alcohol may be factors in a family's situation. This helps enhance safety of the professionals, children, and family. Total Reach: 20 adults - *Sheila Michels, Adams County Health & Well Being Educator*

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
- 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.

Upcoming Events

- RentReady class training for the homeless will be held on Wednesday, December 18, from 4:30-5:30, at the county Annex building, in conference rooms 1 and 2.