



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

Amy Boelk, 4-H Program Educator

- Assumed the role of 4-H Educator on 1/13/25 and began onboarding to Portage County Extension Office, Area 7, UW Madison, Wisconsin 4-H roles and responsibilities.
- Collaboration with Marathon, Portage, Wood and Clark County agents to discuss regional needs assessments, potential for expansion of Portage County's 4-H programmatic reach and unmet needs within the area. Plans were made to attend the Wood County Project Discovery Days in February to build a model for bringing a similar event to Portage County.
- Planning for launch of National 4-H campaign 'Beyond Ready' which focuses on career readiness, leadership skills and community engagement gained through 4-H activities. Themed activities and materials were designed and ordered to be distributed at upcoming Rural Community Connections Winter Celebration events taking place across Portage County through March.
- Met with the Portage County 4-H Leaders Association for their regular monthly meeting. Discussion of upcoming events including snowman building contest, charcuterie board making, speech and presentation workshop, and more.

Additional 4-H Positive Youth Development work being conducted in Portage County

- An in-person professional development program for adult 4-H volunteers where they practiced experiential learning strategies, networked with volunteers from other counties, and learned more about youth development. Total Reach: 20 adult volunteers from 4 counties attended the program - *Laura Huber, Wood County 4-H Program Educator, Erin Sabo, Marathon County, Associate 4-H Program Educator & Holly Luerssen, Marathon County 4-H Program Educator*
- Winter Leadership Camp was held for youth in 7th grade and up, at Spencer Lake Camp to participate in a weekend full of leadership development and fun. Youth from 8 different counties (Calumet, Fond du lac, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Portage, Sheboygan, and Waupaca) came together to work on improving their leadership skills through hands-on, interactive leadership sessions. Total Reach: 40 youth in grades 7 and up. - *Carla Liermann, Calumet County 4-H Program Coordinator, Aimee Elkins, Oconto County 4-H Program Coordinator, Katrina Pionek, Manitowoc County 4-H Program Educator, Penny Tank, Waupaca County 4-H Program Educator, Sarah Feider, Sheboygan County 4-H Program Educator & Tracy Keifenheim, Fond du Lac County 4-H Program Coordinator*



Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Crops and Soils Program Field Notes Podcast features Portage County Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program on-farm research project. Podcast hosts dive into the details of asking the right question, trial design and logistics, and analysis with Ben Turzinski, a third-generation grain and vegetable farmer in Almond, WI in the Central Sands, and Monica Schauer, Research Director for Wisconsin's Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program. Listen to the podcast here: <https://cropsandsoils.extension.wisc.edu/articles/field-notes-episode-23-doing-on-farm-research/>



- 2025-2026 Field-Scale Corn Nitrogen Rate Study on Irrigated Loamy Sand Soils in Portage County, Wisconsin a DATCP Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program grant proposal Significant Planning/Development Activity
- Abstract: Planning a 2-year 2025 and 2026 Field-Scale Corn Nitrogen Rate Study on Irrigated Loamy Sand Soils in Portage County Wisconsin on-farm research study in collaboration with a Portage County crop producer. The goal of this project is to improve our understanding of Nitrogen cycling so we can implement and adapt N management practices to optimize economic returns while improving efficiency of N fertilizer use resulting in more sustainable corn production on our sandy soils in central Wisconsin. NOPP grant proposal submitted January 17, 2025.



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- An introductory educational session for Portage County town officials where they learned about where solar projects are approved and pending in Portage County, the laws that apply to solar project decision-makers, and what options they have to be involved. Through this effort, and through ongoing educational sessions, town officials will be prepared for informed decision-making and engagement regarding local land use changes.
- A series of meetings with a local steering committee to plan for the 2025 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference, which will be held June 16-18 in Wisconsin Rapids. The purpose of this conference is to showcase the scope and impact of entrepreneurial programs across the state, supporting a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem for all rural Wisconsin communities.
- Extension is 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.
- 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



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PORTAGE COUNTY

January 2025 Activity Report

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, Community Leadership Specialist, Amy Ebert, Waupaca County Community Development Educator, Benoy Jacob, Extension Community Development Institute Director & Danielle Hairston-Green, Human Development & Relationships Institute Director*



A workshop for agronomists, where attendees learned about the value and benefit of nutrient management plans, current University of Wisconsin soil fertility recommendations, the importance of nitrogen budgeting, and how to use the Nitrate Leaching Calculator. Through this workshop, agronomists gained the knowledge of how nutrient management planning and nitrogen budgeting is an effective conservation practice for increasing soil health and improving water quality. Total Reach: 10 agronomists - *Anna James, 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*



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 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd grade classrooms at Jefferson and McKinley Elementary School, where students learn about the importance of eating from the five food



groups, try new fruits and vegetables, and learn how food and physical activity can help them now and in the future. This effort was designed to make healthy eating a positive experience which will help students make healthier food choices in the future.

- Part of Rural Community Connections Taskforce planning team with Portage County Public Health and ADRC. The taskforce planned a Community Connection event at Food & Farm Exploration Center with the purpose of supporting community connections and decreasing social isolation.
- A quarterly nutrition education series in Portage & Marathon 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.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- Financial Coaching is 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.
- 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 supports.

Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- A co-parenting class (Parents Forever) for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce or changes in the custody of their children, where they learned skills to prioritize the parent-child relationship and better communicate with their co-parent. This program is designed to increase child well-being and reduce parental conflict during family transitions. - *Luisa Gerasimo, Dunn County Human Development and Relationships Educator*



Upcoming Events

- [Rural Community Connections Taskforce Community Winter Celebrations:](#)
 - Saturday, February 15th, 12:00 – 4:00 pm at the Lions Camp in Rosholt
 - Saturday, February 22nd, 12:00 – 4:00 pm at Almond-Bancroft School in Almond
 - Saturday, March 8th, 12:00 - 4:00 pm at Kennedy Elementary School in Junction City
- RentReady training will be held on Wednesday, February 26, from 4:30-6pm, in the county Annex, rooms 1 and 2.
- Peer-to-peer Financial Coaching Training will be held at UWSP, Friday, February 14th, from 9:00am-3:30pm.
- A [Zoning Board of Adjustment & Appeals Workshop](#) will be held at the Wood County Riverblock Building, Wednesday, February 19th, from 5:00-8:00 pm. Registration required by February 14th. For more information, visit:
- An educational presentation on the Portage County Community Land Trust (CLT) start-up for the Noon Rotary Club will be held on Wednesday, March 5th at 12:00 pm at the Rose House.
- A [Grant Writing Basics virtual workshop](#) will be held on both Tuesday, March 11th from 6-8 pm, and Wednesday, March 12th from 12-2 pm.
- A presentation to WISCAP agencies on the WI Partnership Program's Community Impact Grant award with CAP Service's for their Housing Repairs program will be held virtually on Tuesday, March 11th from 12-1 pm.



Zoning Board of Adjustment & Appeals Workshop

Wednesday, February 19, 2025
5:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Wood County Riverblock Building
111 W Jackson St
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
Riverblock Auditorium, Second Floor

About the Workshop

Learn about the reasons behind zoning and the legal standards required for zoning board decisions.

Who Should Attend?

This workshop is designed for Zoning Board members and local officials.

\$35 per person

Register by Friday, February 14th by contacting:

Victoria Wilson
Wood County Planning & Zoning
715-421-8467 or victoria.wilson@woodcountywi.gov

Questions?

Lynn Markham, Land Use Specialist
Center for Land Use Education
lynn.markham@uwsp.edu 715.346.3879



Center for Land Use Education
College of Natural Resources
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point



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Agenda

5:00 Introduction to zoning

5:15 Role of the Zoning Board

- Role of zoning board is to act like judges
- May a zoning board member talk with the applicant or neighbor outside of the hearing?
- Voting requirements
- When should a zoning board member recuse?

6:00 Dinner (Catered by Chatterbox Catering)

6:30 Zoning Board Decisions

- Variances

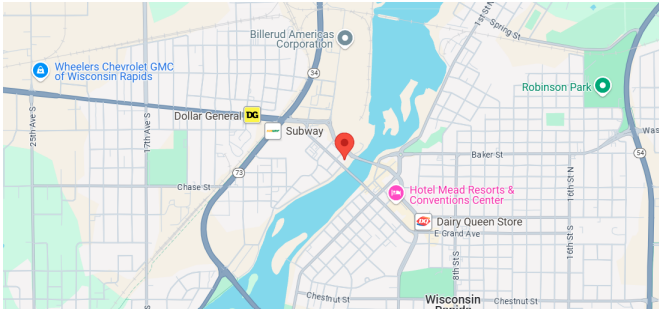
7:15 Would you grant the variance?

7:45 Questions

8:00 Adjourn

Location:

Wood County Riverblock Building
 111 W Jackson St
 Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495



Register by calling, emailing or filling out the form below and mailing to:

Victoria Wilson
400 Market St
PO BOX 8095
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495
715-421-8467
victoria.wilson@woodcountywi.gov



Workshop cost: The cost of the workshop is \$35 and includes printed workshop materials and dinner.

Handbooks: The Zoning Board Handbook serves as a reference for Zoning Board members. It also serves as a resource for Zoning Committee members whose roles and responsibilities differ from Zoning Board members.

Handbooks are \$25 each or free electronically at: www.uwsp.edu/cnr-ap/clue. Click *Planning & Zoning Resources*.

Wednesday February 19th, 2025
5:00 PM to 8:00 PM

Registration Form ✂

Contact Name: _____ City, State, Zip: _____
 Town/City/Village of: _____ Email: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Address: _____

Method of payment: Credit Card (\$1.50 per \$50 convenience fee applies) Check enclosed (payable to Wood County Planning & Zoning)

List Workshop Participants:	February 19 Workshop \$35.00	ZB Handbook \$25.00	Total
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Please note if any attendee has dietary restrictions and what they are here:

Credit Card # _____ Exp ___/___ Security Code _____

Total Amount Owed: _____ \$