



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

- Revision of all project record book pages in collaboration with the Portage County 4-H Leaders Association to make the pages more accessible, easier to read, and youth-friendly based on feedback from stakeholders. The goal is to have simplified, accessible PDF pages in a youth-friendly format to encourage more youth and families to participate in record-keeping throughout the year. Total Reach: 8 record book committee revision members and 250 youth members
- Ongoing planning for transition of duties, clarification of roles and responsibilities and opportunity mapping with the Rosholt Fair Board, UW Extension and Wisconsin Association of Fairs. The goal is to smoothly transition the roles and responsibilities of the Rosholt Fair Board in hosting a fair and completing DATCP and other statutory requirements back to their board/organization and out of the UW Extension office in Portage County where it had inappropriately resided for several decades. The purpose for this transition is to increase the capacity to provide educational opportunities for member and non-member youth in Portage County during the fair weekend. Total Reach: 10 board members; 280 4-H youth and families

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- 2025 and 2026 Field-Scale Corn Nitrogen Rate Study on Irrigated and Non-Irrigated Loamy Sand Soils in Portage County Wisconsin on-farm research grant proposal one of nine projects receiving funding in 2025. Press release and additional information on the Commercial Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Grant Program (NOPP) is available on DATCP's website <https://go.wisc.edu/58wf48>. The project was designed by Ken Schroeder, Extension Portage County Agricultural Agent in collaboration with three host farmers from the Farmers for Tomorrow River Watershed Council and Tracy Arnold, Portage County Land and Water Conservation.
 - 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.





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- A March 13th planning meeting with farmers participating in the 2025-2026 NOPP Farmers for Tomorrow on-farm research project to prepare for the 2025 growing season.

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A special program at the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association Conference for college students to learn about the specialty crops industry in Wisconsin and their efforts to be sustainable. Through this effort students will have exposure to the breadth of careers and the science of sustainability available in the potato and vegetable industry. - *Natasha Paris, Regional Crops Educator*
- An updated suite of nutrient management publications is being prepared to enable cranberry farmers to reference the most up-to-date information regarding nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium, and micronutrient needs and efficiency for cranberry production. The current publication suite is from 2000, and does not address modern hybrids in sufficient depth. - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist & Amaya Atucha, Fruit Crops Extension Specialist*



A regional gathering for Producer-Led Watershed Protection groups in the North Central region, where producer-led group members participated in breakout discussions and facilitated conversation focused on three topic areas - grant management and operational support, community and member engagement, and conservation practices. Through this gathering, producer-led groups explored shared ideas, successes, challenges and opportunities for collaboration while building a stronger network to support producer-led efforts focused on improving soil health and water quality in Central Wisconsin. Total Reach: 23 producer-led group members and collaborators- *Anna James, Regional Natural Resource Educator*



Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- Partnering on a Wisconsin Partnership Program - Community Impact Grant with CAP Services, Inc. and the UW Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies to grow and improve CAP Services' housing repairs programming. The 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.
- Planning for a strategic planning effort with the Stevens Point Fire Department to identify and prioritize goals and initiatives as a department over the next 5 years. The impact of this effort is



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that values, goals, and objectives are aligned across the department, overall strengthening the department's sustainability and growth to effectively serve Portage County residents.

- 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.
- 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 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 4-part workshop series in partnership with Wisconsin Literacy where board members and directors of small literacy organizations evaluate the current state of their organization, analyze support pools for volunteers and funding, and create action plans to ensure their organization is sustainable over time. Total Reach: 21 Workshop Participants 14 Literacy Organizations Sarah Schlosse, Organizational & Leadership Development Outreach Program Manager, Alyson Sauter, St. Croix County Community Development Educator, *Barbara Alvarez, Sheboygan County Community Development Educator & Garret Zastoupi, Eau Claire County Community and Leadership Development Educator*
- Workshops and webinar 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: 200 participants for three



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workshops in three counties, plus 169 participants in webinar. - *Karen Blaha, Outreach Specialist, Center for Land Use Education & Lynn Markham, Shoreland and Land Use Specialist*



A poster session for legislators and the general public, where findings from a social indicator survey were discussed and shared. Through this effort, the audience learned that measured behavior change can be an indicator of improved water quality and the value of community engagement in watershed planning and nonpoint source pollution reduction efforts. - *Anna James, Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist*

- A conference for woodland owners in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois in collaboration with Iowa and Illinois Extension where landowners learned about a variety of forest management topics to allow them to make more informed decisions about the management of their woodland. Total Reach: 285 woodland owners attended the conference - *Kris Tiles, Forestry and Wildlife Program Manager, Jamie Nack, Extension Senior Wildlife Outreach Specialist & Johanna Desprez, Forestry Outreach 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 series of StrongBodies strength training sessions in partnership with Berkshire At The Grove (age-qualified 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.



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- Collaborating with students from UWSP to create a Food Access Map for Portage County that includes grocery stores, farmers markets, farm stands, convenience stores and food pantries. The purpose of this project is to assist community members in understanding all food resources available to them in Portage County.
- Member of the Rural Community Connections Taskforce planning team with Portage County Public Health and ADRC. The taskforce planned Community Connection events throughout Portage County with the purpose of supporting community connections and decreasing social isolation.
- 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 5th 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.

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 on-demand lesson on topics such as budgeting, credit/debt, record keeping, saving on groceries, goal setting, preventing fraud and scams, and finding affordable housing for groups such as residents at a homeless shelter, recent immigrants, a group of young parents, etc. where they learn effective strategies to manage their money. Through this, participants set and create a plan for achieving their financial goals, can create a spending plan that allows them to manage their monthly income and expenses, and can make a plan to become debt-free. Total Reach: 19 college students
- 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,



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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 & Health and Well Being work being conducted in Portage County

- Preparation and facilitation of a strategic planning session, where participants analyze their strength, weakness, opportunities and challenges, brainstorm strategies and prioritize them to better address local health needs and health inequities. Total Reach: Twelve H2N members attended this strategic-planning session. - *Pearly Wong, Regional Community Health Coordinator*
- An Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis Workshop for Local and Tribal Health Departments, where they learn about the purpose, basics, methods and tools and tips to conduct qualitative data analysis to support health needs assessments. This increases community capacity in qualitative data analysis and program evaluation, and community capacity to incorporate community inputs in decision-making in public health. Total Reach: 25 public health professionals - *Pearly Wong, Regional Community Health Coordinator, Selena Freimark, St. Croix County Regional Community Health Coordinator & Sheena Cook-Fuglsang, Vernon County Regional Community Health Coordinator*

Upcoming Events

- Saturday, April 12th, 2025: 4-H Planetarium Show at UWSP 3:00-4:00pm
- Friday, April 25th, 2025: 4-H Feed Bag Tote Making Workshop 5:00-8:00pm
- Sunday, April 27th, 2025: 4-H Leader and Officer Training 4:00-6:00pm
- Sunday, May 4th, 2025: 4-H Stepping stone/Garden Art Workshop 1:00-3:00pm