



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

- Planning for transition of the Portage County Market Animal Project (a current 4-H chartered group) to develop a 501c3 for their animal auction at the annual fair in order to better streamline the work their group is doing for youth livestock education versus animal auction and facility/capital improvements on the fairground. The goal is to transition the auction and financial elements of their group to a 501c3 non-profit, so that the remaining 4-H livestock group can focus on more robust educational outcomes for all youth in the county, not just those auctioning animals at the Rosholt Fair. Total Reach: 15 adult volunteers, 50+ youth in livestock-related projects.
- Planning & Training for 4-H Summer Camp 2025 for Counselors, Chaperones and Youth Attendees in collaboration with Iowa, Waupaca and Portage counties. The goal is to plan the logistics and details of summer camp, prepare and deliver counselor training, develop plans and policies to mitigate risk and to market camp registration so that we can deliver a successful, fun, and educational camp experience in June with staff and counselors that are prepared to assist. Total Reach: 12 youth counselors from 3 counties, 3 4-H educators.
- 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 NOPP Field-Scale Corn Nitrogen Rate Study on Irrigated and Non-Irrigated Loamy Sand Soils in Portage County. The research season has begun. Field trial areas have been established and routine soil sampling completed. Pre-plant Soil Nitrate testing and cover crop biomass sampling to be done the week of May 5th followed by corn planting.
- Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo April 30, 2025. 30 attendees learned about conservation practices that farmers can use to increase profitability and self-sufficiency while being stewards of the land. The program focused on building resiliency, diversifying farming operations, reducing inputs, and increasing farmer return on investment. I served as moderator and discussion leader for the morning farmer discussion panel. The key here is farmers sharing with other farmers their journeys to adoption of conservation farming practices including pitfalls and successes along the way.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- An in-person presentation at the 2025 Heart of Wisconsin Grazing Conference where participants learned about opportunities and challenges with Dairy Heifer Grazing Utilizing Virtual Fencing Technology. Through this presentation, participants were introduced to virtual fencing technology as a tool to increase grazing success through a new technology to improve utilization of forages and management of dairy heifers. Total Reach: 37 presentation attendees.
- Stephanie Bowers, Outagamie County Regional Dairy Educator

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- 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. Total Reach: 5 board members, 4 work-group members.
- Two virtual “Basic Grant Writing Workshops” for local government, businesses, and organization members and staff. The goal of this effort is for people to learn how to find, write and apply for



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grants so that they can carry out the activities of their organization, business, or government unit. Total Reach: approximately 150 individuals from nonprofit organizations, businesses, and local governments.

- 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. 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.
- 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 that values, goals, and objectives are aligned across the department, overall strengthening the department's sustainability and growth to effectively serve Portage County residents. Total Reach: 14 plan committee members.
- 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.

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

- 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 Schlosser, Organizational & Leadership Development Outreach Program Manager, Alyson Sauter, St. Croix County Community Development Educator, Barbara Alvarez, Sheboygan County Community Development Educator & Garret Zastoupil, Eau Claire County Community and Leadership Development Educator*



A study to better understand nitrate occurrence in the streams of the central sands and link that occurrence to land use. Results of this study will help county and regional planners, academic researchers, and regulatory agencies in making informed decisions on groundwater quantity and quality. - *David Hart, Hydrogeologist*



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A facilitated conversation for stakeholder organizations in the Fourmile Creek watershed, where participants discussed and shared past and current water-related research and engaged in collaborative discussion on ways to improve water quality. Through this facilitated conversation, stakeholders engaged in the first steps of developing a comprehensive watershed plan to enhance water quality through ecologically based, innovative, and cost-effective solutions, while also strengthening working relationships and ensuring consistent, continuous management of the watershed's resources. Total Reach: 8 stakeholder organizations including private, non-profit, university, state agency, and county government. - *Anna James, Regional Natural Resource Educator & Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator*



An informational presentation and hands on demonstration of the groundwater model for central Wisconsin residents, where participants were able to learn about surface and groundwater resources of central WI and how land uses can affect them. Through this presentation and demonstration participants are able to learn how their land uses affect their water resources and actions that they can do to mitigate the risks. Total Reach: 80 participants. - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator*



A hands-on groundwater lesson for advanced environmental science students at P.J. Jacobs Junior High, where students learned what groundwater is, how it moves and functions as part of an ecosystem, how groundwater is used and what can impact groundwater. Students will use this information to make informed decisions about their own use of and impacts to groundwater as well as informing future lessons on land use impacts to natural resources. Total Reach: 13 students and 1 teacher. - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator*



A study to assist in determining suitable use of the SPS 385.60(4) Hydrograph Procedure for parts of Adams, Juneau, Portage, Waushara, and Wood counties. Results from this study will help the State of Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) in implementation of the procedure in citing Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems (POWTS). - *Grace Graham, Project 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

- Collaborating with students from UWSP to create a Food Access Map for Area 7 (Clark, Marathon, Portage, Wood) 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 their communities.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for 1st grade classrooms at Jefferson and McKinley Elementary Schools and 1st and 3rd grades at Almond Elementary School. 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.
- A survey for food pantry participants where we gather feedback from people using food pantries in Portage County in an effort to understand their experience at the pantry, what they like and what needs improvement to best serve them. Surveys were conducted at Interfaith Food Pantry and Community Thrift Food Pantry in April with the help of UWSP students to administer surveys.
- 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.
- A collaboration with DPI and the Stevens Point Area School District where engaging, clear menu boards were installed in cafeterias to upgrade school meal appeal, encourage healthier choices and increase meal redemption for students at Jefferson and McKinley Elementary Schools.

Human Development and Relationships

Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- A 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.



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- A quarterly networking group (Right from the Start, RFTS) where professionals working with families who have young children can share resources and make connections. Through this, professionals can better serve the communities and young families they work with, promoting family and community strengths.
- A 7-session course, Planning AHEAD that helps adults of all ages to make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions in order to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored.
- An e-newsletter for parents and caregivers of children ages 0-5 , where parents received monthly information on how to support positive parent-child interaction and better understand child development.
- StrongBodies program focusing on strength building and health and nutrition lessons with residents at senior low-income apartments results in more produce consumption.

Upcoming Events

- Monday, June 16th - Wednesday, June 18th, 2025 in Wisconsin Rapids: [2025 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference](#). Link to even page and registration: go.wisc.edu/cec