

*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 nonprofit, 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. Pre-plant Soil Nitrate testing and cover crop biomass sampling done the week of May 5th with corn planted May 6, 9, and 15th.





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# May 2025 Activity Report

- Mill Creek On-Farm Youth Education Field Day held May 29th. Twenty-seven first graders attended the on-farm field day learning about best management practices to protect soil and water resources through the use of the Enviroscape model, Macroinvertebrates and water quality, and Soil Health and Cover Crops.



## Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A potato scouting workshop for crop scouts working with processing vegetables including potatoes, carrots and beans, to teach them about common insect pests and diseases of these crops and how and when to scout for them. Total Reach: 22 farmers/crop scouts. - *Emilee Gaulke, Waukesha County Diversified Vegetable Educator, Amanda Gevens, Plant Pathology Extension Specialist & Russell Grove, Vegetable Entomology Extension Specialist*



A study to better understand the viability of harvesting potato vines prior to crop harvest and what effects the process has on reducing nitrate leaching. Results from this study will help potato producers, industry professionals, and other stakeholders determine if new vine harvesting equipment is suitable for farming operations and whether or not harvesting potato vines is an effective strategy for reducing nitrate leaching in potato production. The study will also explore the feasibility of converting harvested potato vines into biochar, a possible soil-enhancing amendment. - *Anna James, Regional Natural Resource Educator & Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist*



## 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.
- Partnering on a Wisconsin Partnership Program - Community Impact Grant with CAP Services, Inc. and the UW Center for Community and Non-Profit 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.
- Facilitating 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.
- Ongoing work to establish a Portage County Housing Taskforce, as an output from the 2024 Portage County Housing Summit. The taskforce would first focus its efforts on providing added emphasis and focus on housing to the county as they update their zoning code. The overall goal is to coordinate housing efforts and support action across Portage County so that housing access and affordability is improved.

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



A meeting of County Conservation Staff, County Health Department Staff, and County Board Supervisors of the Central Sands Region, where participants learned about the process used to create risk maps for each of the region's counties, and, through facilitated discussion, reflected on how to use the maps as decision support tools for local management decisions and planning efforts. Total Reach: 20 County staff and County Board Supervisors. - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator*





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A hands-on learning station utilizing the Enviroscape Model for students from Assumption Elementary Schools in Wisconsin Rapids where students learned about watersheds, land use impacts to them, and best management practices that can be used to mitigate human impacts. Through this activity students are able to visualize what a watershed is and how human land use impacts the watershed. Students are also able to demonstrate the impacts of best management practices to minimize human impacts. Total Reach: 51 Students and 10 Teachers. *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater 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*



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 siting 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*

- Shared leadership in the Giving Gardens committee of Partners HP, 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 1st grade classrooms at Jefferson & McKinley 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





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being physically active and help them make healthy choices in school and at home. Total Reach: 84 individual youth.

- A 5-week nutrition education series for 1st and 3rd grade classrooms at Almond 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. Total Reach: 51 individual youth.
- 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.

## **Additional Health & Well-Being work being conducted in Portage County**

- Three regional workshops conducted simultaneously with WI Department of Health Services Maternal and Child Health Title V Adolescent Well-Being Initiative Year 3 Local/Tribal Health Department grantees. Workshop focused on participants identifying youth engagement activities in their communities. Specific areas of discussion around focus groups and youth coalitions to advance adolescent well-being. Participants shared youth engagement opportunities and challenges for their organization. Total Reach: 16 participants from local/Tribal health departments. - *Sarah Boulton, Regional Community Health Supervisor, Pearly Wong, Regional Community Health Coordinator & Sheena Cook-Fuglsang, Vernon County Regional Community Health Coordinator*
- Planning for collaborative activities with three partner organizations: Hmong Autism Neurodiverse Disability Support that serves Brown County and surrounding areas, EXPO-Wisconsin that serves the Fox Valley region, Dane and Milwaukee counties, and Opportunity Development Center that serves Marathon, Wood and Portage counties. The goal is to plan out my role in supporting their Wisconsin Partnership Program activities, so that we can begin to build or strengthen partnerships that enable collaborative efforts to catalyze change, and to increase community's capacity to identify and respond to community-driven health priorities through use of data and evidence-based practice. - *Sarah Boulton, Regional Community Health Supervisor, Pearly Wong, Regional Community Health Coordinator*
- Navigator enrollment assistance provided to anyone in Wisconsin, where 97,013 consumers were assisted with health insurance questions or enrollment. Through this effort, our Navigators completed 4,041 qualified health plan enrollments through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace and assisted 5,615 consumers with Medicaid, resulting in widespread access to health care and improved health outcomes. Total Reach: Statewide: -97,013 consumers helped - 4,041 Marketplace qualified health plan enrollments -5,615 Medicaid enrollments -32,283 consumers educated in health insurance literacy. *Adam Vanspankeren, Outreach Program Manager, Allison Espeseth, Outreach Program Director & Elizabeth Rothe, Outreach Program Coordinator*



## Human Development and Relationships

*Sherry Daniels, Human Development and Relationships Educator*

- A six-module course for social workers, case managers, and community agency staff where they learn about financial competency skills such as goal setting, budgeting, building credit and paying off debts, strategies for saving money, and how to engage their clients in money management discussions. The goal of this effort is to build their knowledge and confidence when engaging clients in financial conversations. Total Reach: 13 participants x 6 sessions = 78 contacts
- After 15 years as Portage County Extension Human Development and Relationships Educator, Sherry Daniels has retired. Her last day in the office was May 16<sup>th</sup>.

## Upcoming Events

- Sunday, June 8th – 4-H Tie Dye Extravaganza, 4:00-6:00pm, Central Sands High School
- Wednesday, June 11th – 4-H Garden Stepping-Stone Workshop, 5:00-6:00pm, Amherst Library
- Monday, June 16th - Wednesday, June 18th, 2025 in Wisconsin Rapids: [2025 Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference](#). Link to even page: [go.wisc.edu/cec](http://go.wisc.edu/cec)
- Wednesday, June 18th - 4-H Speaking & Demonstration Workshop, 6:00-8:00pm, Portage County Annex
- Monday, June 23rd – Wednesday, June 25th – 4-H Summer Camp for youth in grades 3-7 (Portage, Iowa & Waupaca Counties) at Upham Woods in Wisconsin Dells