



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

- In preparation for the 4-H Summer Camp at Upham Woods, our team collaboratively developed a comprehensive camp schedule and coordinated logistics to support a safe, engaging, and educational experience for youth participants. This planning process involved aligning activities with 4-H's positive youth development goals, ensuring smooth operations and meaningful learning opportunities. Our efforts contribute to creating a supportive environment where campers can build life skills, confidence, and lasting connections. Total Reach: 87 youth.
- 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.

Agriculture

Ken Schroeder, Agriculture Agent

- Coordinated with Extension Specialist and Portage County Land and Water staff to transition responsibilities for the 2025 NOPP Corn Nitrogen Rate Study and ensure continuity of Producer-Led Watershed Protection efforts for the Mill Creek and Tomorrow River Watershed groups.
- After 18 years as Portage County Extension Agriculture Agent, Ken Schroeder has retired. His last day in the office was June 27th.



Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- 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 Crop Production Specialist*

Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development

Katie Livernash, Community Development Educator

- A conference, Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities, about entrepreneurship in rural Wisconsin, hosted in Wisconsin Rapids, WI, featuring 16 different sessions about rural economic development and entrepreneurship strategies, to support Wisconsin's rural economic development and thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems. Total reach: 211 attendees.



- 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.
- 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 meeting for conservation and water professionals from six counties in the Wisconsin central sands to learn about the groundwater nitrate flow model created by the Wisconsin Geologic and Natural History Survey and to provide feedback on the models applications and potential improvements. Total Reach: 10 meeting attendees. - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator & David Hart, Hydrogeologist*



A meeting with stakeholders to develop a monitoring plan for the Nepco Lake watershed, that will outlines plans for gathering data that can be used to help inform management decisions in the watershed and activities of the Nepco Lake District in the future. Total Reach: 10 Stakeholders from the Nepco Lake Watershed - *Jen Mcnelly, Wood County Natural Resources Groundwater Educator*

- A series of four summer school lessons on natural resources for outdoor adventure summer school participants in 3rd and 4th grade, where they learned about a variety of natural resources topics so that they can better understand and appreciate the outdoor world. Total Reach: 20 students and 4 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 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

- Supported Aging & Disability Resource Center of Portage County's Stockbox distribution, which provides low-income older adults with a free box of shelf-stable food each month. FoodWise supported ADRC's efforts to provide fresh produce from Central Rivers Farmshed alongside the Stockboxes, and the produce was purchased with a grant from Partners HP.
- 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 series of StrongBodies strength training sessions in partnership with Berkshire At The Grove, 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.
- FoodWise is involved with initial efforts to revive the Healthy Eating Active Living Coalition of Portage County, which is led by the Health Department and WIC. HEAL is currently surveying the needs and assets of the community in order to determine their focus.
- A 5-week nutrition education series for McKinley Elementary Summer 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

- 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*



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

June 2025 Activity Report

Upcoming Events

- A Grow-Solar Central Wisconsin virtual “Solar Power Hour”, in partnership with the Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Tuesday, June 22nd, from 3:00-4:00 pm. [More information and registration linked here.](#)