

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

- A 4-day long scavenger hunt event was created and facilitated over the Rosholt Fair weekend for families, youth, and community members to engage in a free, educational activity using the Goosechase app where various challenges popped up over the course of the weekend. These activities allowed participants to learn about various agricultural and community topics, engage in teambuilding, participate in exercise and self-care, as well as friendly competition between teams. Total reach: 8 teams including over 20 individual participants.
- An evening event for 4-H club leaders and treasurers where they learned from and worked with Extension staff to complete their Annual Financial Reports, audits and appropriately close out their financials for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Club leaders left the event with completed AFR documents or specific tasks and things they needed to revise. Total reach: 12 club leaders
- An event was held for 4-H members where they learned how to speak with clarity, write descriptive narratives and walk confidently in preparation for the upcoming Style Revue event. Several youth participated in the workshop and were better prepared to represent Portage County 4-H at the public style revue held at the Portage County Fair as well as to have confidence with speaking with adults, interviewing and public speaking. Total Reach: 11 youth
- Management, recruitment, leadership and oversight of a 4-H AmeriCorps Member to work in Portage County in an effort to increase 4-H programs offered to youth throughout the Summer.
- 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

Agriculture

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County

- A series of 3 mini-clinics was held at the Cranberry Summer Field Day. While growers are gathered for a trade show and marsh tours, they are able to meet directly with University researchers and hear current research on weed management, protoventuria leaf spot, and physiology research including calcium supplementation and heat stress. These topics were requested by growers to meet their direct needs. Total Reach: 49 - *Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist, Amaya Atucha, Fruit Crop Production Specialist, Jed Colquhoun, Integrated Pest Management Extension Specialist, Leslie Holland, Fruit Pathology Extension Specialist*
- 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

- Through a series of meetings with various community partners, planning for a meeting or coalition of public, private (for-profit and nonprofit) and government service providers in Portage County that touch the continuum of housing services. The purpose is to maximize communication and potential action between organizations, so that housing access and affordability is improved.
- 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.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

August 2025 Activity Report

- Planning for a strategic planning meeting with "Build the Basin", a collaborative regional advancement effort in Northcentral Wisconsin, in collaboration with UW Stevens Point. The goal of this meeting is for the group to establish a shared vision, mission, and priorities of this work in order to support entrepreneurial and placemaking efforts in the region. Total Reach: 12 planning committee members.
- Planning for a regional rural housing summit hosted in Stevens Point in collaboration with state and regional CDI educators, and local, regional, and state housing partners. The goal is to engage developers, local government, and housing practitioners around rural housing solutions and best practices in order to increase affordable workforce housing and local economies in their area.
- 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

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

- A 5-week course where nonprofit leaders assessed their current fund development strategies, explored the importance of diversification in fundraising efforts, learned how to cultivate lasting donor relationships, developed strategies for sustainable support, and made plans to measure the impact of their fundraising initiatives. The intent is to increase the ability of nonprofit leaders to sustain and grow financial support for their organization's work. Total Reach: 37 course participants - Noah Reif, Fond Du Lac County Community Resource Development Educator, Amy Ebert, Waupaca County Community Development Educator, Sarah Schlosser, Organizational & Leadership Development Outreach Program Manager



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 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.

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*

Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, September 10th, 5:00-7:00pm- 4-H Club Leader Training Night