



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 & Research for the 2025-2026 program/ county-wide event calendar for Portage County 4-H
- Planning and designing of all new enrollment and recruitment materials for Portage County families with the goal of modernizing and telling the bigger story of 4-H. Imagery, text and branding was updated on fliers, postcards and tabling materials and an entire collection of 'New Family' documents was created.
- 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.
- 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.
- A club leader training program where 4-H club leaders from around the county learned about the THRIVE model, received policy updates, best practices, shared discussions on suggestions and efforts for club management to better engage youth and families in their communities.
- An event 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.

Agriculture

Additional Agriculture work being conducted in Portage County



A presentation for the Portage County Agriculture and Extension Committee, where Anna Mitchell and Guolong Liang shared their education and outreach efforts in Portage County. Through this presentation, committee members gained insight into the relationships Anna and Guolong have cultivated within the county's agricultural community, and how those connections have supported conservation focused education and outreach initiatives aimed at improving water quality. This presentation is designed to build awareness and support for ongoing efforts focused on improving water quality through farmer-led and on-farm solutions. Total Reach: 6 County Board members -



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

September 2025 Activity Report

Guolong Liang, Commercial Vegetable Agriculture Water Quality Outreach Specialist, Anna James, Regional Natural Resource Educator

- A farmer social event demonstrating interseeding cover crops into a corn field, plus a gallery of images with educational text discussing interseeding timing, species used, benefits of seeding with a drone, and challenges this year. This demonstration event, plus image gallery and educational text was made to highlight how and why Boerst Farm is using a drone to interseed cover crops, plus how they're testing the timing of cover crop planting. The effort was designed to support local learning amongst farmers by featuring how local producers are implementing soil health practices. (Location type: Geography Served) Total Reach: The in-person demonstration and educational social media post reached 6,141 people total. - *Maranda Miller, Regional Natural Resources 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*

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.
- A strategic planning session with "Build the Basin", a collaborative regional advancement effort in Northcentral Wisconsin, in collaboration with UW Stevens Point. The goal of this meeting was 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 workgroup members.
- Planning for a regional rural housing summit in Spring 2026, 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, including meeting facilitation and providing educational presentations to local organizations. The



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

September 2025 Activity Report

goal is to establish a community land trust that ensures long-term housing affordability and stability in Portage County. Total Reach: 6 board members, 28 educational presentation attendees.

- 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.

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, Sarah Schlosser, Organizational & Leadership Development Outreach Program Manager, & Amy Ebert, Waupaca County Community Resource Development Educator.



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.

Human Development and Relationships

Additional Human Development and Relationships work being conducted in Portage County

- A professional development training for more than 100 CAP Services and Head Start staff, where participants learned about UW Extension's parent engagement resources to strengthen family partnerships and enrich the support they provide to children. Total Reach: 100 CAP Services staff and Head Start professionals - Alicia Utke-Becher, Waupaca County Human Development & Relationships Educator



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
PORTAGE COUNTY

September 2025 Activity Report

FoodWise

Mallory McGivern, Nutrition Administrator; Penny Schmitt, FoodWise Nutrition

- FoodWise programming will conclude in Portage County due to the congressional budget reconciliation bill signed into law on July 4 eliminating all SNAP-Ed funding effective September 30, 2025. FoodWise Educator Penny Schmitt will be wrapping up programming, partnerships, and community engagement efforts, ensuring a smooth transition and providing closure to longstanding collaborations with local agencies and participants.

Upcoming Events

- Wednesday, October 8th @ 5pm: Virtual County-Wide 4-H Family Night/New Year Kickoff
- Monday, October 20th @6:30pm: 4-H Leaders Association Board Meeting
- Tuesday, October 21st @6pm: 4-H Cloverbud Halloween Craft Night
- Sunday, October 26th @ 4-7pm: 4-H Adult Leaders/Volunteer Retreat
- Friday, October 31-November 2nd: 4-H Fall Forum in Green Lake, WI