

EXTENSION FOND DU LAC COUNTY JANUARY 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
FOND DU LAC COUNTY

FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHY EATING, AND HEALTHY LIVING



FoodWise advances healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for families with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels. FoodWise reaches individuals and families through local community partners by providing nutrition classes in-person and virtually, indirect education (newsletters, etc.), and social media/marketing. FoodWise is an obesity prevention program that addresses policy, system and environmental changes through local and state public health efforts.

FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Health & Well-Being works to catalyze positive change in Wisconsin families through evidence-based programs focused on nutrition, food security and safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health promotion, prevention of substance abuse and health insurance literacy. Local health coalitions efforts are supported by coalition capacity building tools and health equity frameworks. Rooted in both urban and rural communities, we're working together to help solve the state's most pressing well-being needs and to ensure that all Wisconsinites live stronger, healthier lives.

Amanda Miller, FoodWise Coordinator, Health & Well-Being Educator

The Arc of Fond du Lac provides support and resources for individuals with varying physical and cognitive disabilities. They serve all populations, including youth, adults, and caregivers. They have multiple housing units where residents live. They also have a main center with drop-in (respite care) and day and evening program classes. The center is a location for networking, resource sharing, and offering of classes/events, such as art, music, nutrition, communication skills, etc. Nutrition, food choices, and cooking are important life skills for individuals with disabilities. Clients can range drastically in their familiarity, knowledge and experience of these topics. The Arc of Fond du Lac reached out to the FoodWise Program with interest in offering nutrition education classes. In particular, they are currently partnering with the local hospital, SSM/Agnesian Healthcare, on a grant to offer more education and resources on healthy lifestyles. Classes have been planned for the following: the Self-Advocacy series, which has a one-time session in the series that focuses on healthy eating and food budgeting; a basic MyPlate introduction class for the the Self-Selection classes, which are the monthly classes at the main drop-in center; and a series of cooking classes at three of the housing units. Youth specific programs will be planned in the future, as well.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Noah Reif, Community Development Educator

A series of planning meetings with Prairie Theater and Event Center and Fond du Lac County government stakeholders convened by the County Director of Administration. The purpose of these efforts is to assess internal and external environments, formulate strategies, and develop an implementation plan to meet the goal of the Theater and Event Center being a revenue-generating unit.

The educator was contacted by the County Director of Administration for the purpose of facilitating a strategic planning process for the Prairie Theater and Event Center. The facility is a part of the county's new County Campus. With input from stakeholders, the program shifted towards supporting the organization's goal of becoming a self-sustained, revenue-generating unit. The educator met with the County Director of Administration and collaboratively designed a strategic planning process. The process includes the design of meeting materials, creation of resources, and facilitation of planning meetings. The first meeting was held on January 16 and the Prairie Theater Staff, County Director of Administration, and County Executive were in attendance. Through feedback from the county executive, it was determined that the purpose of these efforts should shift to a more immediate focus on identifying strategies to meet the unit's goal of being revenue generating. Through further discussion, immediate next steps were identified and delegated. These include the review of existing documents relating to internal operations and the gathering of data that will be used in a market assessment/client analysis. The group will meet weekly beginning on January 29th to discuss findings, prioritize needs, and formulate strategies.

AGRICULTURE



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.

Crops

Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator

Planning for a four session Focus on Forage webinar series for forage growers and agriculture consultants in collaboration with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the US Dairy Forage Research Center. The goal is to provide research based forage management solutions to improve forage quality and meet producer goals. (Liz Gartman)

Forage growers and dairy producers require high quality forages to meet the needs of their operations. Changing growing conditions and increased planting and harvest challenges create barriers to achieving these forage production goals.

In response to this situation, forage working group team members outlined the key topics they felt would meet the needs of these stakeholders. Webinar sessions were scheduled using the Zoom platform, and team members identified and scheduled subject matter experts to address each of the topics identified for a four part webinar series.

Dairy

Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator

(Liz Gartman/Manuel Pena)

A newsletter for farmers, managers, employees and agribusiness professionals in collaboration with the Eastern Wisconsin Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative that informs the reader of upcoming UW Madison Division of Extension programs, provides key crop and dairy management updates and includes timely production articles.

A partnership between the Eastern Wisconsin Dairy Herd Improvement Cooperative and Extension results in a newsletter mailed to 300 current dairy producers in Eastern Wisconsin.

The newsletter shares results from the cooperative's milk testing and allows local Extension educators to share key activities, events and articles that focus on improving management related to crops and dairy cattle.

The newsletter is direct mailed to approximately 300 dairy producers every two months, and the targeted information drives dairy producers to engage with Extension programs and educators.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



*The Extension Institute of **Human Development & Relationships** provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.*

Carol Bralich, Human Development and Relationships Educator

All families experience transitions in life, and many will experience divorce, separation, or changes in the custody of their children. In the United States nearly half of all marriages will end in divorce and divorced parenthood is common. Divorce and separation can have profound consequences for children, parents, and families, although adequate support can mitigate negative outcomes in childhood and adolescence. The quality of parenting and the presence of parental conflict are key drivers of children's well-being and are often the focus of court-mandated parent education during this time. Extension's Family Engagement and Relationship program in Fond du Lac County partners with the family court to provide parent education for parents and caregivers experiencing divorce, separation, or changes in the custody of their children. Living Apart and Parenting Together is a three-hour program in Fond du Lac County that provides parents and caregivers with valuable skills for reducing parental conflict, improving communication with co-parents, supporting children during periods of uncertainty and understanding the legal custody process. The program is offered in-person co-facilitated with a family court social worker. As a result of the co-parenting program, parents improve their understanding of parental well-being, co-parenting relationships, and parent-child relationships. Most parents who respond to the post-program survey feel more prepared to coach their child through difficulties related to divorce or separation and are more confident they can keep their child out of the middle of parenting issues. Most parents also report learning new strategies to communicate effectively with their co-parent. The impact of this co-parenting program is important because changes in family structure can have profound impacts on child and parent well-being, findings well documented by research. Parents who receive and engage with parenting classes during family structure changes can learn valuable and effective communication and parenting skills that act as major buffers from the deleterious effects of instability. One of the 27 January session participants stated, " 'I' statement use helps focus on the solution in a respectful way."

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

4-H

Tracy Keifenheim, 4-H Program Educator

40 youth from 8 counties (Calumet, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, Portage, Sheboygan, and Waupaca) participated in the 2025 Winter Leadership Camp at Spencer Lake in Waupaca County. Throughout the weekend, youth in grades 7 and up engaged in hands-on, interactive leadership sessions to help them better understand what it means to be a leader. Along with leadership learning, youth had the opportunity to participate in various recreational activities, including Spark stations, gym & game time, outdoor activities, and a chance to engage with others from other counties. According to the evaluation, most participants would come again, would recommend to a friend, and had ideas to bring back to their counties.

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