

# EXTENSION FOND DU LAC COUNTY FEBRUARY 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*

More than a year ago, a Fond du Lac team presented in Madison at Wisconsin's very first "Community Health Shark Tank". The community health shark tank, led by the Wisconsin Community Health Empowerment Fund, brought business leaders and public health leaders together to solve local health issues in ways using approaches from both disciplines. The project focused on developing a system or infrastructure to support connecting locally grown, farm fresh foods with local early child care sites. This is referred to as "farm to ECE." Since the initial presentation, the local project has grown to include a pilot with 1-2 local daycares and multiple local producers. A local Farm to ECE Coordinator has also been hired to lead the project.

The Wisconsin Community Health Empowerment Fund has since approached the Fond du Lac County team to participate in a year-long Empowering Community Health Learning Collaborative. The Fond du Lac Area United Way, UW-Extension, and Public Health are leading the next phase of this project on behalf of the local team. The next step of this project, the Empowering Community Health Learning Collaborative, will provide monetary contributions towards the local project, connect the local team with evaluation and content experts, and help move the local projects further towards success.



## 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

Strategic planning for Broken Bread Food Pantry where we updated the organization's mission and vision statement, identified goals, and developed action plans. The planning process is intended to clarify the organization's purpose and develop achievable steps to realize its vision.

At the end of January, the educator facilitated a board meeting for the organization's leadership. During the meeting, the educator facilitated a decision making process that resulted in a finalized vision statement for the Food Pantry. The educator also delivered a presentation on the why, how, and what of nonprofit and tax exempt status as the organization looks to incorporate as a separate entity from the local cathedral. Based on the information and facilitated discussion, the board decided to apply for nonprofit status and tax exempt status as a 501(c)(3). Board leadership will work with the director to submit their Articles of Incorporation which will grant them nonprofit status in the state of Wisconsin. The board evaluated the educator as being knowledgeable (4.9 out of a potential 5), providing useful information (5/5), and having high facilitation skills (4.9/5). The board has asked the educator to facilitate their next meeting and provide information about creating organizational bylaws. In preparation, the educator is preparing a presentation on the basics of creating bylaws and is beginning to review a draft of the organization's original bylaws.

## 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

A presentation for the Washington County “Thinking Outside the Barn” program for area crop growers, agency staff and consultants where participants learned about the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program and the project taking place in Washington County. Through this presentation, attendees learned about the requirements for the program, the types of research they can engage in along with opportunities for collaboration between Extension and crop consultants to complete the program.

Questions surrounding nitrogen use in crop production are common in our area. The Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program is an opportunity for growers to ask questions surrounding nitrogen management on their farm and participate in on farm research to answer those questions. I was asked to provide an overview of the program along with some of the challenges and opportunities this project presented to us. I collaborated with Allen Dornacker, the crop grower hosting our NOPP site, and we put together and presented a slide deck that outlined the expectations of the NOPP program as well as some of our take home messages regarding the challenges and opportunities that on farm research offers. There were approximately 70 attendees at the meeting, representing crop growers, NRCS/FSA staff, county land and water staff and crop consultants. This size group gave us great exposure for the NOPP program and encouraged producers to think about opportunities to participate in the project.

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An article for the Midwest Forage Association’s Clippings newsletter that discussed the importance of identifying issues with silage storage structures, the problems for forage quality associated with improper storage systems and some factors to consider when assessing structural integrity. The goal is to identify areas that producers can focus on to ensure proper silage storage in an effort to improve silage fermentation and overall forage quality.

Forage growers have the challenge of dealing with a variety of factors that can affect overall forage quality, many of those issues cannot be avoided. However, silage storage is a key area that can be better managed and as we empty these structures in anticipation of a new crop of forage, it is a prime time to assess these structures and perform maintenance or choose different storage options. I researched the topic and pulled together an article that discussed different silage storage structures and highlighted opportunities to improve and maintain those systems to optimize forage quality and reduce feed shrink.

### AGRICULTURE CONTINUED

#### **Dairy**

*Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator*

A workshop “Calving Management and Neonate Care in Dairy Cattle” for all the individuals that are involved in parturition, and calving management in dairy farms. We are creating an in person and bilingual event hosted in the county, where participants will learn and reinforce their knowledge about obstetrics, care and support in the calving pen, neonate care and colostrum management, and how to maintain the success in the maternity areas. Through this effort we will increase the knowledge and good practices related to the earliest stage of life in dairy cattle, which will represent an increase in herd health, work safety and farm profitability.

A workshop “Dairy Feeder School” for all the individuals with a link with the formulation, mixing, and/or delivering of feedstuff for dairy cattle. We are creating an in person and bilingual event hosted in the county where participants will learn and reinforce their knowledge about feed safety, feed management, transition cow health, and the economics of feeding. Through this effort we will impact animal health and milk production efficiency, by improving the use of resources such as, feed ingredients, time and labor leading to an increased farm profitability and waste reduction.

A series of in person and virtual meetings with UW Madison - Extension colleagues, producer led conservation groups, USDA and Farm Service Agency partners, agriculture industry contacts and crop producers where we discussed opportunities for partnerships, ag community needs and programming gaps, to be able to develop an accurate needs assessment, that will lead to accurate programming that benefit all the different parties of the dairy industry in the region.

The educator is asking questions (for both, English and Spanish speakers involved in the industry) and recording the responses to generate a needs assessment which will provide guidance into future programming plans. Further, the educator has provided support to local dairy farmers as needed by leveraging UW- Madison Extension professionals. This outreach will continue over the future but stronger for the next month to develop relationships with potential partners to establish an Extension



## 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*

According to the 2022 State of Home Affordability in Wisconsin report, 65% of renters in the state pay more than 30% of their income on housing and 37% of renters spend more than 50%/month (among renters who earn less than \$50,000/year). The report also indicates that many renters don't earn enough to afford the average rental unit. The hourly wage needed to afford fair market rent for a two-bedroom Wisconsin home is \$18.56. Minimum wage in the state is \$7.25. Prior to Carol's hire in the spring of 2024, the Rent Smart program was provided to several Fond du Lac County community organization's clients. Carol contacted The Beacon House executive director and discussed the financial and housing needs of clients. The staff was excited to restart offering Rent Smart at the shelter for all residents of the shelter during their stay. Extension's Rent Smart course provides participants with knowledge and skills that can help them find and keep safe and affordable housing that meets their needs. The six-module course features lessons on: Determining what they can afford to pay for rent, checking out the rental property and landlord, application process, understanding who's responsible for maintenance, repair, and care; communication skills, and rental agreements. Over the past 6 months, 16 total Rent Smart participants at the substance use transition house received a completion certificate for the sessions attended. Rent Smart is designed to help participants find and keep safe, affordable, and quality rental housing. Among Rent Smart survey respondents in January 2025, 100% of respondents said this class will or might help me keep housing in the future. When residents have reliable housing that they can afford and landlords have responsible tenants, communities benefit through having a stable workforce. One participant stated, "Thank you. This certificate will help me greatly in the future".

**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*

Based on the 2023, 4-H Thrive data for Fond du Lac County Sparks is one of the lowest scores. To increase the Sparks score, summer day camp programming is focused on specialized interest areas to promote project learning. Volunteers, youth leaders, and the 4-H program educator facilitated the 4-H LEGO Club. Keifenheim and youth leaders are working to continue LEGO Club with a transition in the youth leadership of the club. The LEGO club meets monthly with members to build skills and develop relationships around their LEGO spark! Youth leaders teach brick-building skills to members of the club. September is the first meeting of the new 4-H year so data will be collected throughout the year.

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