



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
FOND DU LAC COUNTY



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

The Purpose To Which We Commit:

WE ARE THE WISCONSIN IDEA

UW-Madison Extension's outreach creates key connection points for families, communities, businesses, non-profit organizations, government, and more. We support local volunteers and leaders to take action and serve as role models in their communities, and we make sure Wisconsinites have the latest research, best practices, and educational opportunities.

THE WISCONSIN IDEA IN ACTION:

PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The Human Development & Relationships program 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.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES

The Extension Community Development program 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, 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.

SUPPORTING WISCONSIN'S AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Supporting Wisconsin's agriculture industry: Whether on the farm or in the field, we're on the front lines of modern agriculture, helping producers build stronger and more productive food systems. From managing livestock to crops to strategic financial planning for farms, our educators and researchers help solve challenges that Wisconsin producers face.

SUPPORTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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

EMPOWERING HEALTH & WELL-BEING

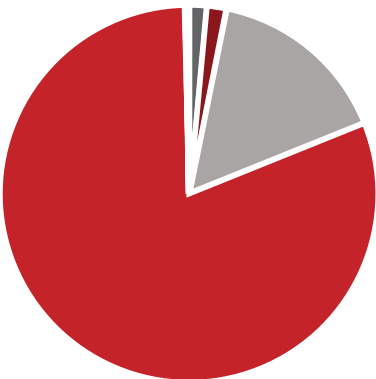
We provide individuals, families, and communities the tools and guidance they need to reduce stress, improve nutrition, and support physical activity. We work with community partners to increase access to healthy affordable food, create environments that promote well-being, and address access to quality health care.

Who We Serve



7,302
Direct Educational Contacts

- Native American or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- White
- Two or more



3,209

Female Learners



2,738

Male Learners

1,328 Gender
Not Indicated



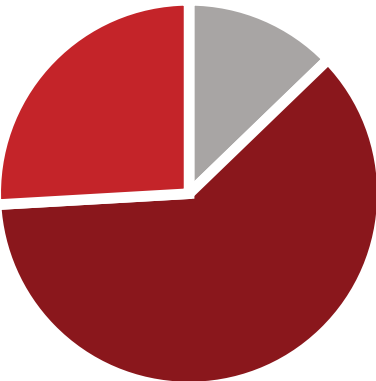
933

Hispanic

4,477

Not Hispanic/Latino

1,892 Ethnicity
Not Indicated





Growing Together: 4-H Program Expansion through Boys and Girls Club Partnership

In 2024, the 4-H program experienced significant growth through strategic partnerships with in-school and afterschool clubs, particularly the Boys and Girls Club. This collaboration aimed to provide diverse, engaging, and educational opportunities for youth in Fond du Lac. The 4-H Cloverbud Reading Adventures Club and Art Club, hosted at Chegwin and Roberts Boys and Girls Club locations, served as pivotal platforms for fostering youth development. These clubs offered specialized interest programming, including reading, art, and LEGO building, tailored to the needs of first through fifth graders.

The Cloverbud Reading Adventures Club engaged 13 youth members in activities that enhanced their confidence, social skills, and subject matter knowledge. Similarly, the Art Club, with 22 participants, explored various art media, promoting creativity and a sense of belonging. Evaluations revealed that 100% of participants found the clubs fun and engaging, with significant increases in interest and learning in the respective subjects. One participant shared, "I love 4-H reading club. They are kind and supportive."

The partnership with the Boys and Girls Club has been instrumental in reaching underserved populations, providing equitable access to programming, and creating a supportive environment for youth. The success of these clubs underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in youth development.

Moving forward, the 4-H program aims to expand these partnerships, offering more specialized clubs that cater to the evolving interests of the youth, ensuring sustained engagement and growth. By continuing to innovate and adapt, we strive to make a lasting impact on the community and empower youth.



"I love the 4-H Reading Club." - Chegwin Boys and Girls Club 4-H Reading Adventures Club member



Building thriving Nonprofits in Fond du Lac County

Nonprofits do more than provide services and resources for community members; they build relationships and transform the way people see the world around them. Through their needs assessment of local nonprofits conducted from mid-2023 through early 2024, the community development educator identified fundraising skills and sustainable fund development strategies as a top need. To meet this priority, the educator launched an ongoing series of nonprofit fund development workshops in October of 2024. The goal of this series of workshops is to build up the skills of nonprofits leaders and their organizations so they can raise the necessary funds to sustainably fund their programs. Due to the positive reception of the first workshop, the educator will be partnering with the Fond du Lac Area Foundation to deliver more workshops in 2025.

In August, the educator partnered with ADVOCAP's Head Start program to create and deliver an educational session on creating powerful questions that help to transform the community they serve. Through the workshop, participants learned why asking questions is important, how to ask powerful questions, and identifying questions with little power vs. questions with great power. Each participant was given the opportunity to write their own powerful question they plan to ask of the community, their colleagues, and themselves in the coming school year. The majority of participants indicated they found the workshop to be highly informative, useful, and of a high quality.



*"Great Information, networking, and handouts. Great professional and personal development opportunity and affordable. Please continue to offer workshops."
- Nonprofit Leader who Attended Fund Development Workshop*



Fond du Lac County Food Summit

Fond du Lac County held its first ever food summit event. The idea of a food summit is to offer a meeting space that brings people together from various levels of the food system to discuss issues related to food security. Food summits aim to foster dialogue, share knowledge, and develop collaborative strategies.

The event was hosted by St. Paul's Cathedral from 8:30 am - 1:00 pm. It included presentations from experts at various levels of the food system. Dr. Sachin Jogal, SSM Health, presented a broad view of how food insecurity affects health. He shared his experiences as a national childhood obesity expert and his work in food deserts. State-wide partners shared resources and toolkits that food pantries can use in their everyday work. Sarah Smith, UW-Madison Extension, presented on a toolkit to help food pantries with food safety and nutrition. Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative, presented a program designed to connect local food pantries with farmers and growers. Attendees were then involved in roundtable discussions about important topics relevant to Fond du Lac County.

The Food Summit had nearly 50 participants, including state partners, food pantries, community meal programs, non-profit organizations, healthcare systems, public health, etc.

Among the attendees, 83% were satisfied with the facilities, space, and food, 96% were satisfied with the presentations, 100% believed that the event was relevant to their everyday work, and 96% were satisfied with the networking. Overall, 88% of attendees were satisfied with the event.



"By the engagement and attendance of such a wide variety of partners and community members, the hard work and effort you put into planning and executing the event showed. You took the time needed to create a thoughtful and productive environment where food security partners could both learn and engage with each other. These types of events are often what can catalyze larger change across the community!" - Food Summit Attendee and Presenter"

Nutrition for Older Adults

Teaching older adults about healthy eating is a way to help others be healthy at any age. Proper nutrition can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases, improve cognition, and maintain physical independence in later life.

FoodWise partners with Riverview and Portland Square Apartments to offer Seniors Eating Well, a 6-week nutrition series. It focuses on nutrition basics for aging bodies, budget-friendly meal planning, cooking techniques, and food safety tips to prevent illness. Through a partnership with the Aging & Disability Resource Center, these classes are also offered at senior meal sites. FoodWise has recently added a strength training program for older adults. Strong Bodies, an evidence-based program, helps participants improve their physical fitness, build strength and build balance.

In addition to the programs and classes offered, FoodWise helps older adults access healthier foods in their community. The ADRC is the implementing agency for the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program established in 2023. This program provides vouchers for older adults to purchase fresh produce at farmers markets. Feedback from seniors was that they either did not know about the program, were confused about it, or did not have the mobility or transportation to pick up their vouchers.

FoodWise and ADRC held voucher distribution events at the various senior housing sites. During that time, FoodWise taught about where and how to shop at the local farmers markets. Partners and seniors appreciated these efforts. In addition, FoodWise has held farmers market tours for older adults groups and helped coordinate a senior resource fair.



"A+ students. Some of our residents have kept and organized all of the handouts from the FoodWise classes!" - Senior Housing Manager



Crops

Resilience is a key to sustainability for crop and forage growers in Fond du Lac County and across Wisconsin. Regional Crops Educator Liz Gartman's outreach efforts in 2024 focused on providing these producers with the tools necessary to respond to challenging markets and volatile growing conditions.

The Fond du Lac Co. Forage Council partnered with Extension to offer two educational programs - the June Forage Twilight Meeting hosted by Vision Aire Farm, and the Forage Council annual meeting and Dairy Forage Day in December, providing key forage management recommendations to forage growers, consultants and nutritionists. Further collaboration with the forage council allowed for research and data collection surrounding alfalfa harvest quality, alfalfa yield and persistence, and corn silage harvest management. These vital programs provide local data to inform future management recommendations and outreach across the state.

Other local activities included a Regional Ag Day program, dairy heifer grazing listening sessions, Focus on Forage and Badger Crop Connect webinar series, DATCP Pest Trapping and a Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program field trial project.

Additionally, Gartman provides bi-monthly agriculture updates via the Regional Ag Updates e-newsletter that reaches 900+ e-mailboxes, an Extension Update on KFIZ radio paired with the Farm Report twice a week and article contributions to press including the Midwest Forage Association's Clippings, Wisconsin State Farmer, Wisconsin Agriculturalist and the Extension Crops and Soils topic hub. These are all ways for Gartman to share her programming and UW research with producers in the region and across the state.

Dairy

Since starting my position as Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator in October 2024, I have been focused on understanding the needs of the local dairy industry in the Fond du Lac County and the rest of the region where I work. My efforts have primarily been centered around reaching out to key stakeholders, including farmers, veterinarians, nutritionists, and financial companies, in order to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment for the region. By establishing strong relationships with these professionals, I aim to better understand their challenges and opportunities within the dairy sector and to create ways of collaboration in the near and far future.

To further integrate into the community, I have attended various industry-related meetings, where I have introduced myself and my role to local producers and stakeholders. This has allowed me to gain valuable insights into the specific needs of the county and its dairy operations.

Additionally, I have collaborated with UW-Madison Faculty on research projects, contributing to the development of resources that will ultimately benefit the local dairy community. I have also taken the initiative to plan two events in this county, focusing on topics relevant to dairy production and sustainability. The calving management and the Dairy Feeder School Workshops. The idea of these events is to bring updated research information to the farmers and workers. Finally, to keep the dairy workers informed, I have participated in articles and newsletters tailored to the dairy industry, helping to share important and accessible information in both English and Spanish.





Rent Smart

The average American tenant is “cost-burdened”. 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.

Extension’s Rent Smart program is designed to help participants find and keep safe, affordable, and quality rental housing. The six-session course features lessons on: determining what they can afford to pay for rent, checking out the rental property and landlord, the application process, understanding who’s responsible for maintenance, repair, and care, communication skills, and rental agreements. Those with negative rental records and those new to renting are able to then increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public supports.

Prior to Carol’s hire in April of 2024, Rent Smart was provided by Extension to Fond du Lac County county organization’s clients. Through Carol’s initial needs assessment interviews, Rent Smart was still regarded as an essential program by organization directors for clients of the Beacon House, St. Katharine Drexel Shelter and ADVOCAP. The staff were grateful to restart offering Rent Smart and were interested in offering it at accessible locations such as the library. From August - December, 32 Rent Smart participants at the homeless shelter and 11 participants at the transition house received a completion certificate.



Rent Smart

Taught by Extension Educators
Helping to make renting a great experience for you!

I learned “different ways to communicate with the landlord”. - Rent Smart participant

Adulting 101: Keys to Independence

The Adulting 101: Keys to Independence program in Fond du Lac County is designed to help young people between the ages of 14 and 23 (including those who age out of foster care) who are already or will soon be facing adult responsibilities. Using research-based resources, and the voices of young people who have shared what they need to know as focus group participants, the program focuses on building individuals’ financial capability through facilitated sessions in the classroom. The curriculum is designed to provide multiple interactive training opportunities to young people to help make connections between what they are learning and their lives. Through this, participants will be prepared to effectively manage their finances and other independent living skills upon their transition into adulthood.

Since Carol’s start in Fond du Lac County in April 2024, the previous pilot program was revised using evaluation feedback of the 2023 participants, observations of the DHS independent living coordinator, and incorporated feedback from older youth who participated in focus groups this past summer with UW-Extension. The 2025 series was held February 19th – April 30th for six Wednesday sessions at 4:30 – 6:00 pm with ten participants.

ADULTING 101

KEYS to Independence
For 15-24 year olds

- Housing 101**
- Work**
- Career Planning & Exploration**
- Money Management 101**
- Wellness**
- Transportation 101**

Join us to unlock the keys to success!

- Explore your future you
- Learn real life skills
- Practice skills in a safe space
- Gain confidence

DATES
February 19
March 5 & 19
April 2, 16, & 30

TIME
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm

LOCATION
Room 205 Extension/Admin Building
400 University Drive
Fond du Lac, WI

TO REGISTER
forms.gle/ErE35ae1mfgZwwGf9

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COMMUNITY GARDENS



We tried something new this year when our garden meeting was scheduled. Grace suggested a get to know everyone 'Garden Party' 'Pot Luck'. Everyone enjoyed the idea and brought a dish to pass to go along with the chili and rustic bread Grace and I provided.

We had early season tilling once again, followed by flooding with the heavy rains which made it difficult to get all the planting done. Many were able to bring their gardens through the wet season only to deal with extremely dry months of August and part of September. The garden season always has different challenges that we learn to adapt to. My newsletter articles were sent out with pertinent information and tips on how to best handle them. If there were specific questions, my office phone is the place to start. I will always answer any specific questions when they arise if you are able to reach out on the internet or my phone.

We had a total of 103 plots rented by 86 families with 17 new registrations. This was a few more than the

previous year's participation. For sign-up next year, we are planning to place more fliers in local establishments to get the word out.

The diversity of gardeners has varied slightly over the past few years with a new demographic of people entering the community. Many dedicated families return to the garden every year and have done so since the early 2000s. Some of the new families choose to try gardening and move on, but a few remain involved.

Gardeners had to struggle with a very wet early summer, followed by long hot and dry spell in late July through mid-September. This year's harvest was reduced significantly. The Extension Office helps with publication of our timely newsletter to help Gardeners learn how to handle issues of each unique garden season. Gardeners are also able to call the Extension Office to ask specifically about any issues that may arise during the garden season.

Once again, our local Master Gardeners supported the Broken Bread Food Pantry with a garden plot dedicated solely for harvest and donations. We also send out delivery information for everyone in the garden wishing to donate extra harvest to any local pantries in the area.



Cindy Sarkady
Area 15 Director



Liz Gartman
Regional Crops
Educator



Manuel Peña
Regional Dairy
Educator



Noah Reif
Community
Development
Educator



Carol Bralich
Human Development &
Relationships Educator



Tracy Keifenheim
4-H Program
Educator



Misty Jimenez
4-H Associate
Educator



Amanda Miller
Health & Well Being
Educator/ FoodWise
Coordinator



Melanie Phillips
FoodWise
Nutrition Educator



Christine Birschbach
FoodWise Nutrition
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