

EXTENSION FOND DU LAC COUNTY

MARCH 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
FOND DU LAC COUNTY

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 bi-weekly radio interview for agriculture producers, consultants, agency staff and other industry persons where updates about state and local Extension related resources, information and events that can benefit their operations are shared. The goal of this effort is to maintain a regular connection between the agriculture community and Extension resources to provide the tools to make better informed decisions regarding their farm business operations to improve farm business viability, environmental sustainability and food safety.

A series of four Focus on Forage webinars for forage growers, livestock producers, agency staff and agricultural consultants where research-based forage management solutions are shared to optimize forage yield and quality to improve overall farm profitability.

- Forage production is an important segment of crop production in Wisconsin and helps to support the livestock and dairy industries in the state. Meeting forage quality and forage yield goals of producers is a key metric to profitability on these operations.
- The Focus on Forage planning team brainstormed timely forage topic ideas and generated a four session series - Focus on Alfalfa Companions, Focus on Corn Silage, Focus on Forage Cover Crops and Focus on Alfalfa Toolbox. The educators then identified Extension specialists, Educators, and researchers that could discuss the impact of these management recommendations to forage growers. Each webinar was one hour long, featured three to four speakers and allowed time for participants to ask questions related to their operations.
- The four webinar series averaged 111 participants per session, which is an increase from the 2024 series. We are currently collecting post event survey data.

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

Planning for Nonprofit Financial Development Workshop for nonprofit leaders with the Fond du Lac Area Foundation. The goal is to support local nonprofits in their own efforts to diversify their funding sources, build organizational capacity to meet expanding community needs, and become more financially sustainable.

The Greater Fond du Lac Area is home to over 700 nonprofits that generate over \$1.2 Billion annually. Of these nonprofits, 68% employ less than 10 staff. Additionally, county nonprofit stakeholders identified financial development as their primary area of need during the educator's need assessment. The educator developed a Nonprofit Financial Development curriculum based on existing Extension resources and their own professional experience with input from the Fond du Lac Area Foundation. This curriculum can be delivered as a single session or a series of sessions. A primary goal of the curriculum is the creation of an organization specific action plan to provide immediate next steps for participants to implement. This workshop will be provided at least twice per year by the 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.

With the support of the educator, the organization submitted their articles of incorporation to the Wisconsin DFI and received their confirmation letter in early March. Additionally, the organization received their EIN number from the IRS. The educator prepared a presentation on the basics of organizational bylaws, their purpose, and sample procedures to follow. The educator facilitated a discussion that determined the organizational leadership would meet with existing interest holders and legal experts to begin drafting their bylaws. The educator will present at an upcoming board meeting on the duties and responsibilities of board members as the organization looks to bring on new board members.

Facilitated a 2-day planning and design workshop to help the community of Waupun, Wisconsin make improvements to their downtown. Members from 5 local organizations as well as citizens at-large worked together to develop a shared vision for future development and enhancements to the downtown. The 2-day workshop provided a forum to collect information to inform community placemaking planning and design alternatives that the community could use to make Waupun more vibrant.

The community of Waupun requested assistance in developing a shared vision the downtown to improve access, circulation, visibility, and vibrancy. This specialist worked with colleagues and local youth to mount a Design Wisconsin community design charrette. This 2-day planning and design process included site visits and focus groups to identify community values, needs, and elements to create a shared vision for downtown Waupun. As a result of this effort, the community is equipped to realize their shared vision.

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 created an in person and bilingual event where participants learned and reinforced 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 pretended to increase the knowledge and good practices related to the earliest stage of life in dairy cattle, which should represent an increase in herd health, work safety and farm profitability.

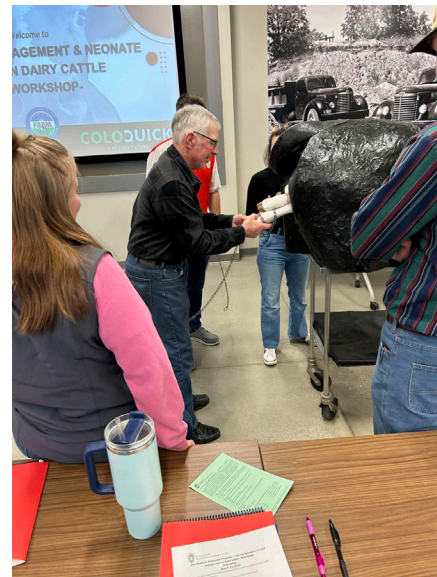
Local dairy producers from Fond du Lac county, have expressed a strong interest in improving their calving management practices to enhance herd health and productivity. This workshop, “Calving Management Practices and neonate care” was developed in response to these needs, aiming to provide dairy producers with the recent research based information. We addressed a program in Spanish and English to discuss topics such as calving preparation and assistance, neonatal care and colostrum management, disease prevention, nutrition and feeding, protocols and recordkeeping and data management. This program had a lecture session in the morning and Hands-On demonstration, where attendees had the opportunity to practice calving events on a cow model along with learning guidelines for calving management practices, record keeping and colostrum quality. With the development of this program, we provided great tools to farmers and workers to: Improved understanding of calving management practices Enhanced ability to recognize and address health problems Improved skills in colostrum management and feeding Increased confidence in handling calves Increased adherence to recommended protocols Improved recordkeeping and data management Enhanced commitment to animal welfare Increased willingness to participate in ongoing training and education.

English participant:

“I really enjoyed today. It was very well organized with good information. I thank you very much!”

Spanish participant:

“Que todo fue muy interesante y la informacion fue muy valiosa. Gracias por considerarnos (comunidad latina) en las capacitaciones que ofrecen.”



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

Many parents face challenges in finding trustworthy information to support their young children's development and family well-being. The national Just in Time newsletter program was developed to address these challenges by providing timely, research-based parenting tips and resources based on their child's current age. Recently, the Just in Time Parenting Newsletter delivery update was initiated in response to the growing need for accessible, reliable parenting resources. By updating the newsletter delivery system we aim to ensure that parents have the tools they need to foster a nurturing and supportive environment for their children. In response to the identified need for accessible and reliable parenting resources, the state Just In Time Newsletter Team undertook a comprehensive update of the Just in Time Parenting Newsletter. They collaborated with experts in child development and family well-being to ensure the content was both accurate and practical.

The updated newsletter was then distributed to parents, providing them with valuable insights and resources to support their children's growth and enhance family dynamics. The update to the Just in Time Parenting Newsletter resulted in several positive outcomes. Parents reported increased confidence in their parenting skills and a better understanding of child development principles. Evaluation results indicated that parents who utilized the newsletter's resources were more likely to engage in positive parenting practices, such as effective communication and consistent discipline.

In Fond du Lac County, over 300 parent households with newborns received the newsletters in 2024. Over 85 received the newsletters via mail and 245 parents received the newsletters electronically to their email inbox once per month. A significant amount of the newsletter subscribers were Spanish speaking families. The focus in 2025 is to increase outreach efforts to Spanish families by using the state team's new promotional materials with community partners including SSM Health St. Agnes Hospital in Fond du Lac, SSM Health Waupun Memorial Hospital and SSM Health Ripon Community Hospital. After sharing my county focus, and the need to have Spanish bookmarks and postcards available, the state team has been working collaboratively to create translated versions for Extension educators and community partners to share with Spanish families. These outcomes contribute to broader societal issues by promoting healthier family dynamics and reducing the risk of child behavioral problems. By empowering parents with knowledge and practical tools, the newsletter supports the development of well-adjusted children who are better prepared to succeed in school and life. This effort not only benefits individual families but also strengthens the broader community by fostering a supportive environment for all children to thrive.

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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

Family Learning Day is an annual project day for 4-H youth where participants learn different project skills throughout various workshops to provide hands-on learning opportunities. The goal of this effort is for youth to explore different topics and find what interests them. Based on the 2024, 4-H Thrive data for Fond du Lac County Sparks is one of the lowest scores. Family Learning Day supports the effort to enhance project learning and increase the Sparks score.

The county 4-H program puts on a large project learning day where youth Kindergarten through High School can sign up for 5 different sessions and try learning new project skills throughout the day in hands-on workshops. This gives youth the chance to find their sparks or discover new ones. There is a call put out to volunteers, community members, and youth for workshop presenters. After the presenters are confirmed, youth can register for the event. This effort also builds out project learning opportunities as some project areas don't have project leaders, but might have a class offered during this event.



Here are some testimonials from Family Learning Day Sessions Participants:

"It was fun but a little challenging."
"Very age-appropriate activity."
"Very cool project we can do at home!"
"This was something I would do again."
"It was fun but I didn't like the Boba Tea."
"It was fun and I learned something new."
"Diamond Art is nice and beautiful."

As a result of the event 95 youth were able to do hands-on project learning. There were several evaluations indicating they learned something new, and the sessions they attended were engaged or increased their interest in the topic presented. Keifenheim is hoping to have more youth leaders present workshops in the future. Youth completed 326 out of 335 responses, as there were a few sessions for adult volunteers. 99% of the evaluations said their sessions were fun and engaging. 90% stated they learned something new and the sessions increased their interest in the topics. 88% stated yes to "I tried something that I have not done before this session." 99% of participants stated the instructors were helpful.

Tracy Keifenheim, 4-H Educator, and Misty Jimenez, 4-H Associate Educator, partnered with the Fond du Lac Boys and Girls Club Chegwin location to continue a 4-H afterschool club within the Boys and Girls Club. The need was to provide special interest programming to first through third-grade youth. Jimenez worked with Kari Baker, Chegwin Extension Director, to build out the 6-week Cloverbud Reading Adventures Club for 1st-3rd grade members. The club had 13 youth members. Each week, we dive into inspiring books with titles such as Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg and Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty. The club members engage in a variety of activities, crafts, and games that bring the stories to life, from making fizzy planets, turning mistakes into masterpieces, and making raisins dance! Seven club members completed evaluations after the club concluded. Of the youth who completed the evaluation, 100% strongly agreed with the following statement: "This club was fun and engaging." The statement: "This club increased my interest in Reading Adventures." 100% of participants strongly agree. "I learned something new from 4-H Cloverbud Reading Adventures Club." 86% strongly agreed and 100% of the youth strongly agreed with the statement: "The instructor was helpful." The following statements were written in comments: "I love 4-H reading club.", "They are kind.", "I like the 4-H Pledge.", and "She's kind (the instructor)."

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

March is National Nutrition Month®, so what better time than now to start becoming healthier through healthy eating and physical activity. National Nutrition Month® is a nutrition education campaign created every year in March by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. It began as a National Nutrition Week in 1973 and became a month-long observance in 1980. It focuses attention on the importance of making healthy eating and physical activity choices. The 2025 theme for National Nutrition Month is “Food Connects Us!” Food is a connecting factor for many people. Food connects us to our cultures, others’ cultures, our families and our friends. Sharing a meal is an opportunity to learn about its preparation, who made it and where the ingredients are sourced. Health, memories, traditions, seasons, and access can all impact our relationship with food. While these factors influence the foods we eat, the foods we eat also affect our health.

There are many reasons a person may want to start eating healthy and being physically active, including weight loss. But, there are many more benefits to a healthy lifestyle, including feeling better and a reduced risk of chronic diseases. For example, eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of heart disease and may protect against certain types of cancers. Eating a diet high in fiber may reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity and type 2 diabetes. Every 5 years, the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) release the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA).

FoodWise is partnering with the Fond du Lac Public Library to recognize National Nutrition Month. FoodWise is holding a session at the library on “healthy eating for older adults.” The library also has a dedicated section for patrons to check out books, publications, and resources on nutrition and healthy eating.

For more information, visit Choose MyPlate www.choosemyplate.gov/, National Nutrition Month® <https://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month>, and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>.

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| Diana Hammer <i>Community Development Educator</i> | Misty Jimenez <i>4-H Associate Educator</i> | Manuel Peña <i>Regional Dairy Educator</i> | Cassi Worster <i>Marketing Specialist</i> |
| Noah Reif <i>Community Development Educator</i> | Amanda Miller <i>FoodWise Coordinator Health & Well-Being Educator</i> | Patty Percy <i>Community Garden Coordinator</i> | |
| Carol Bralich <i>Human Development and Relationships Educator</i> | Melanie Phillips Christine Birschbach <i>FoodWise Educators</i> | | |

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