

# EXTENSION FOND DU LAC COUNTY

## MAY 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*

Developed a Farm to ECE (Early Childcare Education) video. The purpose of this video is to highlight the progress and partnerships made between local farms and daycares in Fond du Lac County as a result of this project.

It is alarming and surprising to know that many children do not know where their food comes from. If asked, they may answer with "the grocery store." Farm to ECE (or Early Childcare Education) programs play a vital role in promoting food literacy, supporting local agriculture, and teaching young children and their families to appreciate and recognize where healthy, locally sourced foods come from. For nearly two years, UW-Madison Extension has partnered with the Fond du Lac Area United Way, Fond du Lac County Public Health, and the Wisconsin Community Empowerment Fund to develop a farm to ECE (or early childcare education) program in Fond du Lac County. As a result, 2-3 daycares are feeding their students fresh, local foods from 3-4 farms throughout Fond du Lac County. In addition, a Farm to ECE Coordinator has been hired to lead these efforts in the future. To share more about this important and valuable program, the team has created a video featuring local farm partners, local daycare partners, and nutrition and health experts. The video also features the impacts it has made on the children and families.



*Pictured: the Fond du Lac County Farm to ECE team.*

### 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 1:1's with county nonprofit staff and directors to identify county wide trends and forces impacting their ability to achieve organizational goals. The educator will use the information gathered to inform future programming that is responsive to community needs.

As the cost of living increases and funding for key support systems that support community members decreases or disappears, nonprofit organizations are being called on to fill this service gap. However, community organizations including nonprofits who serve those in the greatest need rely on funding that comes from federal grants where gaps in philanthropic giving exist. To better support the community nonprofits engaged in the work, the educator will interview a cross section of these organizations to determine broad trends and identify possible programming opportunities to support organizational development and leadership development that meet the needs identified. The educator has met with seven organizations during the month of May, including the Salvation Army of Fond du Lac, The Arc of Fond du Lac, and the Fondy Food Pantry. The educator will continue these meetings and supplement with focus groups and follow-up surveys in the coming months. A full report will be provided once the needs assessment has been completed.

Educational support for a group community nonprofit convened by United for Diversity. With Extension's support, community nonprofits learned about the basics of grants and discussed strategies to increase the likelihood of successfully identifying, applying for, and receiving grant funding.

The United for Diversity Board President contacted the educator and requested the educator teach a 30 minute "crash course" about the why, how, and what of applying for grants as a nonprofit. As uncertainty about funding sources increases, it is critical that nonprofits build up the skills to stand out in a crowded field of organizations looking for funding. The educator created a presentation based on existing knowledge and extension resources, before submitting the finalized presentation and material to United for Diversity. This session provided community nonprofits with the foundational skills to prepare, find, and successfully apply for grants that will help forward their organizational missions. The meeting was attended by 9 nonprofit leaders from Fond du Lac County. The presentation, called a "Nonprofit Skills Cram," was well received, with participants rating the presentation modestly (3.7 out of 5) on new knowledge gained and highly (4.6 out of 5) on usefulness. The educator's facilitation and quality of presentation was evaluated as a 4.9 out of 5. A detailed report of the event was prepared by the educator for the United for Diversity Board and attending nonprofit leadership. The educator is exploring creating a regular series of "Nonprofit Cram Sessions" based on different nonprofit skills and emerging community needs. Potential topics include board development, individual donor fundraising, and evaluating programming.

"Excellent job fitting so much fantastic ground level information into less than 30 minutes. Very informative and insightful."  
- Community Nonprofit Leader

## 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 participant stated, "I statement use helps focus on the solution in a respectful way."





*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 series of alfalfa measurements that will help to better understand optimum alfalfa and winter cereal harvest across Wisconsin. The results of this study will help forage growers to determine what techniques can best predict optimum forage harvest timing to improve first cutting forage quality for livestock.

- First crop alfalfa cutting tends to represent the largest quantity of forage yield for the year, representing approximately 36-41% of total dry matter (DM) yield. When harvested in a timely manner, it can result in high levels of neutral detergent fiber (NDF) digestibility while still meeting yield goals.
- Mismanaging first crop forage harvest timing creates challenges for the farm. Too early harvest leads to lower yield and extremely high-quality forage which some farms may struggle to properly utilize in their ration. Later than optimum harvest yields distinctly lower forage quality and may jeopardize a farm's plan for future harvest events.
- There is a diverse network of forage-focused staff at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension that have led the effort to track, report, and record alfalfa quality using Predictive Equations for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) and correlate with lab analyzed scissors cut results.
- A uniform statewide effort results in greater understanding and correlates relationships between PEAQ measurements and relative forage quality (RFQ) from lab reports in various growing regions across Wisconsin allowing for the development of future predictive tools to improve grower forecasting and decision-making capability.

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A hybrid Foundational Crop Scout training that blends a series of webinar trainings with in person field days for entry-level crop scouts, crop growers and consultants where participants learn the basic skills necessary to scout field crops including corn, soybeans and alfalfa. Through this training series, we will provide "just in time" training to crop scouts as they begin work in the busy growing season.

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A webinar where participants were introduced to the basic concepts of scouting grain and forage crops for pests, crop growth stages, nutrient deficiencies and other issues. Through this effort, beginning crop scouts will have the initial tools they need to effectively identify crop production issues that can help growers and crop consultants better manage through the growing season to secure crop yield and profitability.

- While it is important to master the technical skills related to crop scout work, the planning and pre-work is key to a thorough field visit. I identified some of the very basic needs related to crop scout work - identifying the necessary tools, gathering field history and grower information, creating reports, utilizing available resources.

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### AGRICULTURE CONTINUED

- There were 17 live views of the webinar from non-extension viewers, and the recording will be posted to the Foundational Field Scout Training Website for on-demand viewing. When reviewing the evaluation, the following comments were shared: “I was excited to see that there are disease/pest calendars. I had many windows/dates in my head but it really helps me to see them all laid out visually.” “Saved all the links and will look into them. Will do some additional scouting today!” “I plan to have a strong relationship with customers and my managers/agronomists. To make sure everyone is aware of what is happening.”

#### **Dairy**

*Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator*

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 pairs 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 partnership allows Extension educators to determine what resources are most important to producers at the times the newsletter is published, which in turn provides research based solutions to growers and farmers when it makes sense for their farm. We collaborate with DHIC staff to ensure timely delivery of the content. 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.

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A regional agriculture newsletter for Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Washington and Ozaukee county agriculture producers, industry representatives and agency staff that provides timely crop production updates, dairy and farm management resources and upcoming agriculture events. The goal is to create awareness of Extension programming and research in the region and maintain a connection between UW and the ag community.

Crop, dairy and livestock producers make key management decisions every day based on challenges related to markets, weather and farm goals. It is important for them to have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to help them choose production methods that help them achieve their goals. As a result, the Regional Ag Updates newsletter is prepared and e-mailed to approximately 900 ag producers, agency staff and agribusiness consultants that support farmers. In the winter months, the newsletter is sent monthly, with issues every two weeks during the crop production months. This newsletter shares field trial opportunities, timely management updates and tools to support production decisions, along with UW Extension and partner event opportunities. This newsletter consistently has a 40% open rate and one recipient shared the importance of having upcoming local and statewide events listed in one place. It further has become a great partnership tool between Extension and local producer led watershed groups, land and water departments and state agencies. This effort creates a greater awareness of resources available to support their farm production goals.

## 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*

The Fond du Lac County 4-H Educator attended the Welcome 4-H Club Meeting to support youth members and adult volunteers in their club engagement. As part of this visit, the Educator led an interactive LEGO team challenge, introducing members to LEGO club activities while fostering collaboration and problem-solving skills.

During the meeting, the Educator engaged with youth, parents, and volunteers to answer questions about club processes, including LEGO club and shooting sports opportunities. Additionally, conversations with a parent explored volunteer opportunities, further strengthening the club's support network. Post-meeting feedback was shared with the club's general leader to enhance future programming and engagement.

This visit reinforced the importance of direct educator involvement in 4-H clubs, allowing for relationship-building, program enrichment, and responsive support to youth and volunteers. Members expressed enthusiasm for the hands-on activity, highlighting the impact of experiential learning in strengthening engagement.

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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