



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
WOOD COUNTY



ANNUAL **REPORT** 2019



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University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Wood County

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EXTENSION: **CHANGING LIVES & COMMUNITIES**

For a century, Extension has come to represent the Wisconsin Idea – expanding university knowledge to every person in the state. As a Division of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension expands the University’s outreach. Extension epitomizes the Wisconsin Idea, delivering programming across the state to create solutions. Extension also partners with business and government leaders, community groups, and agriculture, natural resources, and youth and family development professionals to collaborate on research opportunities.

Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs—on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. Extension has a measurable impact – changing lives and communities through:

Supporting Wisconsin’s Agriculture Industry »

Whether on the farm or in the field, we’re on the front lines of modern agriculture, building stronger, more productive food systems and agricultural products. From animal management to crops and soils to financial planning, our educators and researchers help solve challenges that Wisconsin producers face.

Fostering Leadership and Civic Engagement »

From educating elected officials to training the next generation of local leaders, we’re committed to empowering citizens to make positive, transformative change in their communities.

Empowering Families and Communities »

We provide individuals and families with the tools and guidance they need to adopt positive health behaviors. Our programming focuses on nutrition, food security, food safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health, substance abuse and health insurance literacy.

Promoting Aging-Friendly Communities »

We embrace the philosophy that each stage of life is unique, exciting and filled with potential. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness into everyday use.

Enhancing Resilient Natural Resource Systems »

We work with partners across the state to ensure that our diverse natural resources remain resilient and productive. From water and forestry programming to conservation training and youth environmental education, our educators and researchers navigate complex issues, facilitate challenging conversations, and help develop innovative solutions.

Supporting Positive Youth Development »

Our research-based youth enrichment programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to grow into the global leaders of tomorrow. From youth governance to Wisconsin 4-H clubs, we provide diverse educational opportunities to prepare youth for success in Wisconsin and beyond.



Agriculture

Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator

Working With Local Cranberry Producers

Extension Wood County works closely with the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association, the Wisconsin Cranberry Board and specialists at UW-Madison departments of Horticulture, Entomology and Plant Pathology to deliver programming to every cranberry grower in Wisconsin. Information is shared through the Cranberry Crop Management Journal, which is produced up to ten times during the growing season, using grant funds. The journal is mainly delivered by mail, and is also available to access online.



Cranberries being harvested in Necedah, WI.

Other partners include crop consultants affiliated with marketing outlets such as Ocean Spray Cranberries and independent consultants. Timely information regarding nutrient and water management, new pest infestations of weeds, insects and plant disease is presented. Cultural methods of control as well as pesticide applications utilizing integrated pest management principles help growers produce their crop sustainably and economically.

In addition to responding to environmental and weather conditions during the growing year, the latest research is presented to the grower community by specialists. Topics include: improving cranberry genetics, creating environments for native pollinators, winter dormancy, frost protection, seasonal uptake of plant nutrients and factors contributing to winter hardiness.

Wisconsin produces about 2/3 of the total U.S. cranberry crop.

SUPPORTING OUR CRANBERRY GROWERS

235

Total number of Wisconsin cranberry growers

500

Copies of the Cranberry Crop Management Journal distributed

350+

Cranberry growers who attended seasonal educational events in 2019





Agriculture

Key factors for farmers and the agriculture industry in Wood County for 2019:

- Record wetness prevented planting and resulted in late planting, low crop yields and soil damage due to moisture.
- On-going low prices for milk, corn and soybeans and low feed inventories have caused farms to close at an accelerated rate.
- Dairy farm closures and lack of profitability have led to mental depression and suicide in the farm community.

Programs and efforts to assist the farm community:

- Extension offered programs and information introducing the new Farm Bill programs. The Farm Bill has improved safety net programs for smaller producers; Wood County producers are smaller, on average, at the national and state level.
- We offered programs and materials on recognizing depression and how to help those who are depressed.
- Extension helped producers one on one, in articles and fact sheets, on how to manage feed inventory during times of shortage.
- Producing quality forage from delayed planting, cover crops and alternative forages was offered in programs, newsletters, articles and fact sheets.

Partnerships with Wisconsin Farm Bureau, Farm Technology Days grants, Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the National Farm Medicine Center extend Extension's reach.

- Training to recognize and support families dealing with financial stress and depression.
- Farm Safety and rescue training.
- Heart of the Farm program addresses mental health and awareness; builds community and support for women involved with the management of farms.
- Training for youth making career choices possibly related to agriculture.



Community Development

Nancy Turyk, Community Development Educator

Wood County Energy Initiatives

In 2019, Wood County received the US Department of Energy's SolSmart Gold designation. Through a variety of initiatives, the County achieved the highest designation, indicating to others that the County is "solar ready".



Turyk presenting Wood County Board Chairman, Doug Machon, with the SolSmart designation plaque.

To achieve this designation, Turyk coordinated this effort both internally and externally, worked on the development of an energy website for County businesses and residents, facilitated a solar assessment for four County buildings by the National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL), conducted presentations about SolSmart at towns and community meetings, assisted with the development of a County Energy Plan, supervised a UW-Madison student intern for the development of a baseline energy use evaluation for the County, and developed partnerships with Mid-State Technical College and the Midwest Renewable Energy Association.



Community ribbon cutting for the solar energy project at Nepco Lake County Park.

In the past year, the County installed its first solar energy project at Nepco Lake County Park.

Turyk serves as a source of information to the County Board's newly formed Renewable and Sustainable Committee

and other County staff who are interested in this topic.

CLEAN SWEEP HIGHLIGHTS

12,371

Pounds of household materials collected

2,460

Pounds of agricultural materials collected

280+

Vehicles participated

40%

Increase in participation over recent years



Community Development

Preventing Pollution from Hazardous Waste

In September 2019, Wood County held a Clean Sweep event at the Town of Saratoga garage, located in the southern portion of the county. More than 280 vehicles participated in the program, which was about a 40% increase compared with recent years. Participants arrived in a steady stream throughout the four-hour event.

The 2019 Clean Sweep event accepted materials from households and agriculture totaling 12,371 and 2,460 pounds, respectively. In addition, a swap table was provided for participants to leave or take unopened products.



Turyk prepared the grant application to receive partial funding through Wisconsin's DATCP, worked with the Town and contractors, and coordinated the volunteers and their outreach efforts.



Volunteers assist with the collection of materials at Clean Sweep.

Looking to the Future: Wood County Economic Development and Quality of Life Strategies

The development of an economic development plan for Wood County is underway with guidance from faculty at Purdue University and the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension.

To fund this endeavor, Turyk guided the preparation of the application that led to the successful procurement of funding from USDA's Rural Economic Development Initiative program (REDI).

Turyk and Wood County's Director of Planning and Zoning, Jason Grueneberg, are coordinating this effort with input from the County Board Chair and Chair of the Conservation, Extension, and Economic Development (CEED) Committee.

Twenty-five people involved with economic development make up Wood County's planning team. The team kicked off the planning process in 2019, with a final plan anticipated in fall 2020. The plan will identify strategic goals, key participants, and options for funding the initiatives.

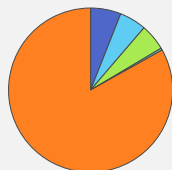


Health & Well-Being

Kelly Hammond, Program Coordinator; Hannah Wendels, Nutrition Educator

Program Highlights

- New Program Coordinator, Kelly Hammond: Before coming to Portage and Wood counties, Kelly was an Extension FoodWise Nutrition Educator in Waupaca county. Kelly has an Associates of Science in Nutrition/Dietetics, a Bachelors in Communication/Public Relations, and a Masters in Community and Organizational Leadership/ Sustainable Food Systems through UW-Stevens Point.
- New Nutrition Educator, Hannah Wendels: Hannah comes to FoodWise from the Wood County Health Department, where she worked on the River Riders Bike Share and farmers market projects. A recent graduate of UW-Stevens Point with a degree in Health Promotion and Wellness, Hannah will be teaching nutrition lessons at Mead, Howe and Grove Elementary Schools in Wisconsin Rapids, along with many other community engagements.
- Expanded classes and programming at South Wood Emerging Pantry Shelf (SWEPS) with nutrition lessons and gardening series.
- Reaching new audiences with Spanish interpretations at Grocery Store Tours.
- Integrated work with community members including expanding access to FoodShare and resources at farmers markets and collaborating with the South Wood County Hunger Coalition.



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



FoodWise CONTACTS

1,682

Total Contacts

419

Direct Educational Contacts



231

Male Learners



192

Female Learners



29

Hispanic

390

Not Hispanic/Latino



Health & Well-Being

SWEPS: A Garden for Everyone

In summer 2019, the Wood County Master Gardener Volunteers, Extension Human Development & Relationships Educator and FoodWise team worked with the SWEPS staff and pantry guests to build, fill, plan and plant three raised beds and dozens of bucket gardens. In combination with the garden, Extension provided continuing education for pantry participants in a series of classes: gardening basics, propagating plants, harvest and second planting and food preservation.

This program was an expansion of the SWEPS and Extension Educational Series, which offers free nutrition and financial classes to pantry participants and community members. In the first summer, over 50 families took home a container garden, and dozens more enjoyed watering and caring for the gardens, as well as taking the produce home to their families.

Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives

FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We advance healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels.



SWEPS attendees learn how to plant a container garden.



Hammond working with families to plant the gardens at SWEPS.

ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In Wood County, FoodWise partners with The Wood County Health Department, WIC, CAP Services/Head Start, SWEPS, South Wood County Hunger Coalition, the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Wisconsin Rapids Area School District and many others to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.



Horticulture

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Assistant

Learning the Historic Importance of the Back-Yard Garden

Four Wood County Master Gardener Volunteers (WCMGV) maintained and presented the Civil War era Wakely Garden at Historic Basse Pointe in Nekoosa. These volunteers gave daily 20-minute presentations during the growing season; most of the participants were children from school groups with over 1,800 total attendees.

During the presentations, the Wood County Master Gardeners discussed the historic need for each family to grow a garden for their personal food, medicines, cloth, dyes and flour. The presentation changed with the needs of the garden, including preparing, planting, and harvesting. Each week, the children were given a hands-on opportunity to participate; in the fall, the children threshed wheat to prepare for grinding.

Attracting More than Butterflies

At least 70 residents and family members of Edgewater Haven in Port Edwards benefited from the Sensory Gardens maintained by five Wood County Master Gardeners.

The themed and accessible beds are designed around each of the senses, including edibles such as blueberries, strawberries and herbs.

Early in 2019, the garden became a Certified Monarch Waystation through the University of Kansas-Lawrence. After learning about monarchs through the literature displayed at the garden by Master Gardeners, a wheelchair-bound resident began to raise monarchs on his own. During the season, he raised and released 40 monarchs, sharing the experience with other residents at the nursing home.

WCMGV IMPACT

67

Active Wood County
Master Gardener
volunteers

1,421

Hours of continuing
education completed by
WCMGV

11,105

Individuals impacted by
WCMGV outreach efforts

6,077

Hours of volunteer service
completed by WCMGV

\$145,858

Value of WCMGV
volunteer contributions*

**based on the value of \$25.43 per hour for volunteer time in WI for 2018, according to Independent Sector*



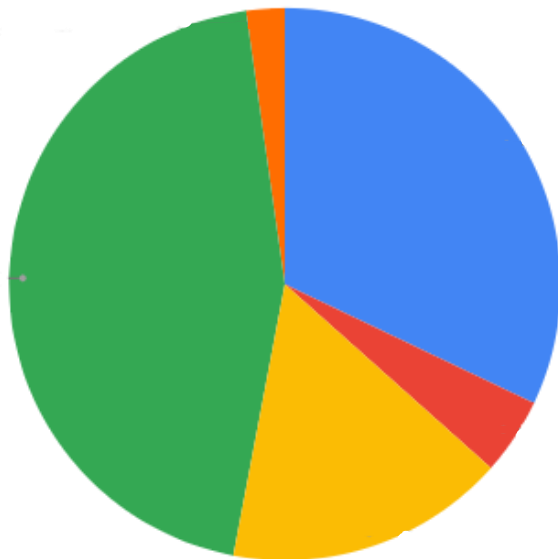
Horticulture

Building Upon Previous Success

In 2018, the Wood County Master Gardeners began a pilot program, traveling to each library throughout the county to give a “Coffee and Garden Talk”. In 2019, the WCMGV expanded the program, adopting six of the seven county libraries and hosting a series of round table discussions at each location.

Some libraries hosted programs year long, while others were conducted from June through August. Knowing that libraries can be a lifeline in rural communities, eleven Wood County Master Gardeners were able to bring educational opportunities to even the most agrarian areas of Wood County.

WCMGV Projects and Time



- Gardening: 44.8%
- Administration/Support: 32.1%
- Educating Others: 16.4%
- Answering Questions: 4.5%
- Miscellaneous: 2.3%

Hours Spent on Top 10 Projects

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 1. | Spring and Fall Plant Sales: | 514 |
| 2. | South Wood County Historical Museum Gardens: | 473 |
| 3. | Standing Committees/Teams: | 472 |
| 4. | Miscellaneous Educational Programs: | 386 |
| 5. | Wakely Gardens: | 344 |
| 6. | Garden Walk: | 312 |
| 7. | Marshfield Fairgrounds Educational Gardens: | 302 |
| 8. | North Wood County Historical Society (Upham Mansion): | 238 |
| 9. | Wisconsin Rapids Zoo Gardens & Horticulture Education Center: | 233 |
| 10. | Growing Friends Community Gardens of Wisconsin Rapids: | 211 |



Human Development & Relationships

Jackie Carattini, Human Development & Relationships Educator

Wood County Financial Security Program Impacts

Extension's financial security programs help Wisconsin individuals and families achieve financial well-being by keeping pace with day-to-day expenses, reaching financial goals, planning for life's unexpected events, and securing their financial future.

Two areas emerged to focus on in 2019:

- The first was to promote the Rent Smart program to encourage safe and stable housing in Wood County.
- The second was to target youth to begin conversations and healthy habits around money.

Rent Smart

The Rent Smart program focuses on the knowledge and skills essential for a successful renting experience. In 2019, Jackie Carattini, Human Development and Relationships Educator, provided the Rent Smart program to participants through Job Center and local transitional housing programs. 52 individuals were able to complete the Rent Smart training in small group or individual sessions. By partnering with Wood County service agencies, participants had additional help in finding safe and stable housing after completing the Rent Smart program.



2019 Rent Smart Evaluation Results:

- 100% of participants better understand the importance of building a positive relationship with their landlord.

FAMILY LIVING CONTACTS

52

Individuals completed Rent Smart training

100

Percent of Rent Smart participants who better understand the importance of a positive relationship with their landlord

637

Wood County youth received financial education

70

1st-5th grade youth from BGCWRA received Financial Education lessons in summer 2019



Human Development & Relationships

- 98% of participants better understand how finances affect getting or keeping rental property.
- 99% of participants better understand how landlords screen applicants.
- 99% of participants better understand their responsibilities as a tenant.
- 99% of participants better understand the responsibilities of the landlord.
- 97% of participants feel more confident that they will be able to communicate their rental needs with their landlord.

Financial Programming Targeting Youth

Carattini also partnered with various agencies including the Financial Stability Coalition of South Wood and Adams Counties, Ho-Chunk Head Start Program and the Boys and Girls Club of the Wisconsin Rapids Area (BGCWRA) to promote financial education to a total of 637 Wood County youth.



Recap of Boys and Girls Club Financial Education Programming - Summer 2019:

- 70 youth, ages 1st through 5th grade, participated in small group lessons.
- Educational sessions were presented, based on the concepts from the books “Just Saving My Money” by Mercer Mayer and “Honest Abe’s Funny Money” by Jack Silbert.
- All youth were able to distinguish needs verses wants, identify a savings goal and identify ways to save.
- Carattini, in conjunction with the Financial Stability Coalition, developed lesson plans, activities and parent letters to go with the books.





Natural Resources

Rachael Whitehair, Regional Natural Resource Educator

Newly Appointed Natural Resource Educator

To address threats to ground and surface water quality, Wood County and University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension appointed Rachael Whitehair as the Regional Natural Resource Educator in October of 2019. Her duties are to develop and support ongoing water quality improvement efforts as well as farmer-led watershed initiatives focused on soil health and water quality. She will work with county land and water conservation staff, state agency staff, and others to fulfill goals focused on mitigating non-point source agricultural pollution.

Threats to Water Quality

Wood County's karst topography and shallow groundwater table make it all too easy for contaminants from surface activities like agriculture, industry, and housing development to find their way into ground and surface water resources.



Whitehair showing high school students the groundwater model at UWSP-Wausau Career Expo.

The northern two-thirds of the county is particularly susceptible to sediment and phosphorus loss which is gathered in surface water streams as runoff. The lower third is highly susceptible to nitrate contamination that is applied to the soil as fertilizer or liquid manure. The sediment and phosphorus loss from agricultural fields to surface waters and the nitrate leaching to the groundwater supply have direct effects on the citizens and natural communities of the county. Excess phosphorus contributes to blue-green algal blooms in ponds and lakes which is harmful to both humans and livestock.

(continued on page 15)

WORK BY FARMERS OF MILL CREEK*

28

Farmers participated in no-till or cover cropping in 2019

86%

Increase in the number of farmers participating in no-till or cover cropping over 2018

1,204

Acres were recorded to have cover crops

1,418

Acres were recorded to have no-tilled

**The Mill Creek area covers land in both Wood and Portage counties.*



Natural Resources

Nitrates are difficult and costly to remove from drinking sources and are especially harmful to infants and women either beginning or within pregnancy. Across more urban landscapes, a lack of native ground cover and polluted stormwater also contribute to these water quality concerns.

A bottom-up approach to these challenges will focus on place-based education, the growth of partnerships between community groups, and capacity building among citizen and producer-led efforts.

A New Era of Land Management

Weather trends in recent years have provided ample rainfall in increasingly more drastic events. Many agricultural producers are experiencing stress amidst these weather trends as sustainable production methods grow more difficult to maintain. Topsoil loss, reduced fertility, and poor water infiltration have contributed to this issue. Innovative farming techniques like no-till, cover crops, and pollinator plantings are helping farmers and landowners rebuild their soils and grow resiliency and profitability on the land. By simply leaving soil intact and keeping living roots in the ground year-round, fields will become more fertile, build structure, invite beneficial microbes and increase water holding capacity. These principles apply to all landscapes, including urban areas and residential lawns. Keeping a few patches of native habitat around can also bring large benefits. Native plants invite natural predators to keep crop pests in check without the use of pesticides and serve as a filtering system for runoff and infiltrated groundwater.



Cover crop mixture interseeded into standing corn.

Future Programming for 2020

Prairie Pollinator Program: Wood and Portage County, The Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council, and The Friends of Mill Creek Watershed Committee present the “Prairie and Pollinators” educational program to area schools. The program involves hands-on, interactive learning activities that teach students about Wisconsin’s landscape, the importance of pollinators, and works with classrooms to start their own prairie plantings. **5 Wood County schools are already signed up for 2020 presentations!**

Profitability Workshop: This coming year will be largely focused on developing and delivering educational opportunities that will simplify the transition to soil health practices like no-till and cover crops. A regional field day event is in the planning phase for December 2020 and will display both the financial and environmental benefits of farming greener.



Positive Youth Development

Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator

4-H in Wood County

16 community clubs

4 chartered groups

2 SPIN clubs



Project GEN Connect: Learning to Give

On March 9th, youth and adults gathered together at McMillan Memorial Public Library for Project GEN Connect - a day of intergenerational community service learning. Youth were 4-H members from Wood and Marathon Counties, and grandchildren of the adult participants. Adults included members of Wood County Home and Community Education (HCE) clubs, members of the community, and grandparents of 4-H members. In all, over 30 people worked and learned together, while enjoying each other's company.

Participants learned how to sew two projects for patients at the Marshfield Medical Center and Aspirus Riverview Hospital. Flannel hearts were donated to families with babies in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Anti-Ouch Pouches were donated to patients who have undergone breast surgery or radiation. All of our volunteers learned how these projects provide comfort and fill a need for patients. They also learned sewing skills needed to create projects like these.

The most notable outcome of Project GEN Connect: Learning to Give was not the sewing skills learned or the projects completed and donated. The greatest outcome was the appreciation that bloomed between our volunteers. In a world that seems divided in so many ways, young and old came together to forge friendships and understanding. Everyone walked away happy and thankful for the opportunity to build friendships across generations.

This was a collaborative effort between Wood County 4-H, Wood County HCE, and Extension staff Jackie Carattini and Laura Huber.

WOOD COUNTY 4-H IMPACT

688

Youth members

185

Enrolled, certified adult volunteers

6,148

Hours of community service

15,640

Total volunteer hours

\$392,877

Value of 4-H volunteer contributions*

**based on the value of \$25.43 per hour for volunteer time in WI for 2018, according to Independent Sector*



Positive Youth Development

Summer Camp with Wood County 4-H

Just as soon as most schools let out for summer break, Wood County 4-H kicked into high gear with not one, but TWO overnight summer camps!

Wood County joined Portage, Taylor, and Waupaca Counties for Intermediate Camp, hosting campers in grades 4-8 at Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center on June 9th-11th. Just days later, on June 14th-15th, youth in grades 2-4 attended Junior Camp at the Central Wisconsin Environmental Station. Wood County had three counselors serve at each camp.

While at camp, youth:

- unplug from technology like phones and tablets
- spend their days physically active
- grow and test out their independence
- develop life skills to last a lifetime



Campers set out for a canoe ride

When asked what was the most important thing they learned at camp, responses included “be yourself, more people will like you”, “respect others and they will respect you”, “all people care about you”, “be kind to the environment” and “to always be a role model”.

Partnership with Hewitt’s Meat Processing & Wood County FFA for Youth Meat Processing Contest

In October, twenty-six youth representing Wood County 4-H and FFA programs came together to learn and create bratwurst as part of a Meat Processing Contest. The youth spent one night in the classroom and then donned hairnets, gloves, and frocks for an evening making five unique bratwurst recipes at Hewitt’s Meat Processing in Marshfield.



Youth learning how to make bratwurst

Youth ranged in age from 4th grade through high school and it was an “all hands on deck” experience for everyone. The crew was divided into teams, and each team was assigned a different recipe to make. Recipes included apple, cherry, cranberry wild rice, gummy bear and orange Kool-Aid. The evening ended with a tasting and ranking.



Youth tasting the brat varieties

This program was made possible with a grant from the 2018 Wood County Farm Technology Days and donations from Hewitt’s Meat Processing.



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