



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
WOOD COUNTY



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



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# UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES *with* THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

As a statewide engagement arm of UW–Madison, the Division of Extension embodies the Wisconsin Idea to extend university knowledge to every corner of the state. That mission started in 1912 with Extension’s first agent making farm visits and continues today along with community and business development, youth engagement, and well-being programming. Our statewide network of educators and specialists with the UW–Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences and on UW campuses across Wisconsin is responding every day to emerging and longstanding hurdles residents are overcoming to compete and prosper. We’ve identified key opportunities to leverage local resources and leading research to affect change and improve lives through:

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## Supporting Wisconsin’s Agriculture Industry »

We use applied research from UW-Madison’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in addition to other Campuses along with educational outreach to support an economically viable agricultural industry that produces safe food in an environmentally responsible manner.

## Fostering Leadership and Civic Engagement »

We work with communities across the state to support individuals, groups, and organizations to enhance quality of life and improve overall well-being, leading to stronger communities today and for generations to come.

## Creating Positive, Healthy Change »

We catalyze positive change in Wisconsin families through evidence-based programs focused on nutrition, food security, food safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health, and substance misuse.

## Empowering Families and Communities »

We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding, enhance aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents, and help families put technology, mindfulness, and financial awareness to use.

## Enhancing Resilient Natural Resource Systems »

We help individuals and communities make informed decisions that support the state’s rich land, water, and mineral resources. We’re working to ensure that our resources remain at the heart of our communities, economies, and state identity.

## Furthering Positive Youth Development »

We prepare the youth of today to become effective, empathetic leaders of tomorrow. From teens advising local government to Wisconsin 4-H clubs, we offer diverse educational opportunities that put youth on the path to success in Wisconsin and beyond..



# Agriculture

*Matt Lippert, Agriculture Educator*

## A Strong Start and then a Big Change in Strategy

January and February 2020 started out with some great Agriculture programs. An Automated Milking Systems Meeting (AMS) on robotic milking was well attended. A grant for the program provided funds to bring in a speaker from Finland and an Extension Specialist from Minnesota. There were sponsorships for the program from milking equipment suppliers as well.

In March, the annual Heart of the Farm Program for Farm Women was cancelled and we went to all virtual and distance learning opportunities for the remainder of the year.

Newsletters and magazine articles were useful educational tools. Working with other Extension specialists, Matt and colleagues produced webinars on "Methods to Reduce Milk Production through Diet". This was created in the face of new production quotas for farmers and milk being dumped. A podcast "Heat Abatement Strategies for Dry Cows" was produced in the summer.

Fall and winter programming included Badger Dairy Insights, which were offered on Tuesdays at 1pm. This was a part of a larger collection of programs titled "Farm Ready Research" that were accessible through online enrollment.

## Agriculture Collaborations and Partnerships

Extension Wood County partnered internally for many virtual offerings and also worked with Mid-State Technical College, Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry, UW - Marshfield Agriculture Research Station, and area High School Agriculture instructors to offer support and ideas to help producers be successful in 2020.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL FARMERS

**1062**

Total Farms in Wood County

**145**

Dairy Farms in Wood County

**570**

Copies of the Central Wisconsin Agriculture Extension Report were distributed quarterly

**18**

Agriculture radio interviews broadcasted locally



# Agriculture

## 2020 Milk Price Variable and Frustrating: Lippert Provides Professional Insight for Producers

An article written by Matt Lippert was published in the Wisconsin State Farmer magazine and the Wisconsin Agriculturist magazine and online platform, to help dairy producers understand the value of feeding for higher milk protein yield. The article is titled “Today, the money in the milk check is in the protein”.

Milk is priced at the farm level based on its content of butterfat and protein. Markets did a number of unusual things in 2020 which resulted in very large swings in the price of milk. The price dropped to \$12.14 in May and by July, it more than doubled to \$24.54 per cwt. One constant was the protein became more valuable relative to fat in 2020, as compared to the previous four years.



*Dairy cows grazing on a Wood County farm in Pittsville*

In the current environment, feed ingredients used and practices on the farm highly reward improving milk protein yield.

The information on how to feed for more protein yield from cows was featured in a farm newspaper, a farm magazine, a radio interview and an email news feature reaching many dairy producers. Circulation of the publications totals over 40,000. This was timely information developed for the current market affected by the pandemic.

Agriculture Agent, Matt Lippert, also worked with producers to take advantage of farm support programs such as Coronavirus Food Assistance Program I & II.

## Agriculture Retools and Updates

Dairy facilities modernization guidance continued through the pandemic. Contacts were made over the phone and with limited farm visitation for farmers and those considering farming, allowing them to make better decisions.

In 2020, the Wisconsin Rapids Verso mill was closed. Several people who lost their job due to the closure contacted Lippert about utilizing their agricultural land and buildings to see if updates could be made to facilities to enter the dairy farming industry.

In another case, Lippert assisted a crop farming family that was considering adding a dairy enterprise. In several other cases, he advised dairy farmers in adding and updating dairy heifer facilities.

In several of these cases, it was identified that the capital needed and the expected return was not well suited for the individuals to enter the dairy business. For the existing dairy farmers, successful plans were made to update the facilities.

Overall, even a decision not to take action was a favorable outcome. Lippert was able to share his expertise and help the individuals understand the economics of dairy production.



# Cranberries

*Allison Jonjak, Cranberry Outreach Specialist*

## Wood County Welcomes New Extension Cranberry Outreach Specialist

Wood County is the top cranberry-producing county in North America so it is a natural fit to have Cranberry Outreach Specialist, Allison Jonjak, working out of the Extension Wood County Office. Allison began her position on April 1, 2020.

Allison's efforts are focused on improving education about cranberry production practices. Since joining Extension, Allison has hosted virtual education events focusing on nutrient use efficiency, water use and quality, profitability, and integrated pest management. Cranberry growers appreciate a regional specialist who is deeply in tune with their challenges and who can create programming to address pressing needs.



## Cranberry Harvest Safety Assistance

In the uncertainty of 2020, the cranberry crop still needed to be harvested. Many growers had questions about how best to protect their workers and their marshes, when temporary harvest crews swell the number of workers on-farm. Allison sought answers to questions, and prepared a planning guide for marsh owners and managers, as well as a video in both English and Spanish, that could be shared with crew members before they arrived to work. These materials, titled Harvest in a Covid Era, prepared employees for the safety processes they would be following on the farm.

The goal of Harvest in a Covid Era was to help eliminate risk that doesn't bring a benefit. The planning guide outlined simple and straightforward steps to reduce risk of disease spread.

## SUPPORTING WISCONSIN CRANBERRY GROWERS

**235**

Total number of Wisconsin Cranberry Growers

**407**

Copies of the Cranberry Crop Management Journal were distributed bi-weekly April through September

**578**

Attended Virtual Cranberry Educational Events

**1060+**

Viewed Virtual Cranberry Video Interviews



# Cranberries

## Virtual Cranberry Outreach

### **Mini-Clinic and Brown Bag Events**

An April Mini-Clinic has long been a staple of the cranberry program, letting growers talk with researchers as their crops begin to transition to the growing season. Common topics are nutrient management and early season weeds and insect pests. Because 2020's restrictions on gatherings happened before the Mini-Clinic was scheduled, virtual sessions were held on the planned date, and were well received by growers.

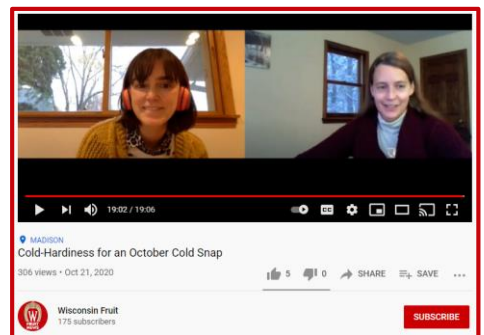
As a result, with encouragement from Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association (WSCGA), Allison created a schedule of monthly "Virtual Brown Bag" events. The brown bags became a series of one-hour virtual meetings, hosted the last Friday of each non-harvest month. The meetings were facilitated by the Cranberry Outreach Specialist and featured research specialists, crop consultants, industry experts, and grower panels. Topics were selected in 2020 based on direct grower requests. Topics for 2021 will be a combination of grower requests and suggestions from the WSCGA Education Committee.

2020 "Virtual Brown Bag" topics included: legislative, researcher and crop consultant updates, Covid safety for harvest, winter grower panel, nationwide roundup, cranberry school and business management.

### **YouTube Video Interviews**

A new format explored in 2020 was the video interview. When several growers would reach out to Allison with a similar question that could be well-addressed by a conversation with a specialist, Allison would record a Zoom interview with the specialist. Interviews are then closed-captioned and uploaded to Wisconsin Fruit's YouTube channel as quickly as possible, as the content is generally time-sensitive. The Leaf Drop and Cold Hardiness for a Cold Snap videos both got more than 50% of their views on the day of release.

We expect these videos will continue to be useful for reference for growers in coming years, and that future topical video interviews will be added to the collection as well.



*2020 video interview topics included: leaf drop, leafhoppers, murder hornets, Covid safety for Harvest (in English and Spanish) and cold hardiness for a cold snap.*





# Community Development

*Nancy Turyk, Community Development Educator*

## Case Study: Successful Business Reopening during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Following the Safer at Home period in Wisconsin that took place early in the Covid-19 pandemic, many businesses were unsure how to re-open in a manner that would be safe for their employees, patrons, and visitors while maintaining financial viability.

Ho-Chunk Gaming Nekoosa worked with the Public Health professionals at the Ho-Chunk Nation and Wood County to develop plans for a safe setting. They were one of the area's first large businesses to re-open to the public during the pandemic. The Casino manager participated in the discussions about how to help businesses respond to and weather the pandemic that took place during the County's economic development task force weekly meeting and invited participants to visit the Casino to learn from their experience.

The Wood County Health Department managers and Community Development educator, Nancy Turyk, met with a team of professionals at the Casino to see and hear about the approaches they chose to employ for safe operations.



From this experience, Nancy prepared a 2-page case-study to share with other businesses that were seeking ideas. The case study covered how the facility was prepared, steps to keep patrons and employees safe, planning for response to Covid-19 cases, and reflections on the need for planning for long-term disruptions.

## CLEAN SWEEP HIGHLIGHTS

# 7654

Pounds of household materials collected

# 3693

Pounds of agricultural materials collected

# 200

Vehicles participated in the event with newly enforced safety restrictions.





# Community Development

## Wood County Rural Economic Development Initiative

The role of county government in guiding economic development varies throughout the state. Some counties hire economic development specialists while others are only passively involved through their planning and zoning efforts. Wood County sought to explore their role in economic development. Additionally, the County wanted assistance identifying and prioritizing economic development initiatives to guide the allocation of staffing and funding.

To obtain support for this process, Turyk worked with County staff and partners to successfully access support from Extension at Purdue University and UW-Madison through a USDA Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) grant.

Over the past year, 25 representatives created the Wood County REDI plan. Throughout the process, the Community Development educator facilitated many of the work groups and meetings, coordinated with the partners, and prepared the final document.

The highest priority initiatives included expansion of broadband, identifying county branding, supporting an entrepreneurial ecosystem, developing a housing plan, and continuing a collaborative economic development group. This experience further enhanced the capacity of the partners to function as a team. This was most evident when they came together to learn about the pandemic and developed strategies to assist local businesses, often by providing services, resources, and support not typically offered by the partner organizations.

Having an economic development plan with SMART goals will enable the County to address impediments to economic development in a coordinated fashion and improve access to needed funding for implementation. Ultimately, the outcomes will help alter the projected trajectory of a declining population in the County.

## Wood County Clean Sweep

Hazardous waste that is improperly disposed can impact human health and have environmental consequences. As unused products are stored around the home and farm, labels can become illegible, leading to an inability to identify contents and containers can decompose, leading to unintended leaks and spills.

The Wood County Board of Supervisors annually allocates funds to compliment funding from DATCP enabling them to offer an annual Clean Sweep Event for County residents at no additional cost to participants. Extension Community Development Educator, Nancy Turyk, prepares and submits the DATCP grant proposal and organizes and facilitates the event.

In 2020, this included identifying the location (Marshfield Agriculture Research Station), coordinating with the contractor, County Health Department and host facility, publicizing the event, printing needed signage, overseeing the event, and developing and submitting the report to DATCP.

Clean Sweep events help residents become more aware of the types of products they are purchasing and the need for proper disposal, which can lead to healthier communities, water, soil, and air.



# Health & Well-Being

Kelly Hammond, Program Coordinator; Hannah Wendels, Nutrition Educator

## Wild Edibles

In spring, a Wild Edibles class, created by the Natural Resources Educator, 4-H Program Educator, and FoodWise Nutrition Educator, helped families learn how to correctly identify wild edibles, gather their findings, and prepare what they found to enhance their knowledge of what grows locally in their communities.

The Educators combined efforts to host a 2-session virtual class. In addition to the interactive lessons, participants received a Wild Edibles Identification Booklet and a supplies toolkit prior to the first class.

Families met with all three educators at the first virtual session to learn how to identify wild edibles growing in their communities and how to properly store them once collected. Families came together at the second virtual session to share what they found and learn how to prepare their findings in their own kitchens.

Participants indicated that they were positively impacted by this hands-on learning activity and hope to join future Wild Edibles classes in different growing seasons.



Wild Edibles class flyer

200+

Community members reached through direct virtual education

17

Percent increase in FoodShare participation

250+

Wood County students reached through virtual programming



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## Community Impacts

- Online Nutrition Education for all WRPS Students
- Full suite of online programs offered, for all ages. Classes included Healthy Babies, feeding toddlers with Yuck to Yum and healthy aging with online Strong Bodies classes.
- Educational support of Boys and Girls Club with engaging at-home nutrition activities.
- Support of SWEPS Food Pantry Food Drive in collaboration with the South Wood County Hunger Coalition.
- Collaboration with Wood County Health Department to improve access to FoodShare and resources at the Farmers Market.



# Health & Well-Being

## Engaging Partners and Reaching New Audiences

2020 challenged us to think of new ways to reach our audiences and provide new resources. While handing out food boxes in partnership with South Wood Emerging Pantry Shelf (SWEPS) and Feeding America, we promoted future online parent and adult education classes.

In fall 2020, we pilot tested 4 curriculums that were adapted to meet an online audience - Healthy Babies, Yuck to Yum, FoodSmarts and Strongbodies. These classes reached new audiences, from the parents of young children with infant feeding, to providing physical education along with lifelong nutrition information to seniors.

## From Classroom to Computer



*Hannah and Kelly teaching at Mead Elementary*

2020 started off with a year of change for Wood County FoodWise, with new educator, Hannah Wendels, and new interactive curriculum in the classrooms. Just as education was getting underway with 3rd grade and Kindergarten classrooms at Mead, Howe and Grove Elementary, the pandemic hit. These classes were all ultimately cancelled.

Fall 2020 arrived, and the FoodWise team was ready with a suite of online options for WRPS schools. Teachers were offered live virtual classes, interactive Bitmoji classrooms or pre-recorded YouTube lessons.



*Hannah's interactive Bitmoji classroom*

## 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.

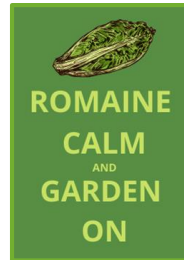


# Horticulture

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

## Romaine Calm and Garden On

With the outbreak of COVID-19, food supply anxiety has created a unique need for virtual beginners gardening courses. Reports of anxiety due to possible disruptions to food supplies have fueled a resurgence in popularity of war time Victory Gardens. Seed companies and nurseries saw an uptick in their sales. People who have never gardened before are looking for research based educational opportunities.



In an effort to fill that need, Janell created a series of gardening classes specifically for those with limited resources, using the Zoom platform. 12 sessions total were held twice a week, one hour each. The course was free and participants received links to supplemental material available through The Learning Store.

- 80% reported an increase in confidence to choose appropriate containers
- 77% reported an increase in confidence in differentiating which crops should be direct sown vs transplanted
- 73% reported an increase in confidence in appropriately watering their gardens
- 60% reported an increase in motivation to use cover crops
- 63% reported an increase in understanding weed management
- 86% reported an increase in motivation to employ IPM techniques
- All participants reported strong levels of confidence to harvest their garden produce safely

### At the completion of the program:

- 88% of participants reported they were more motivated to contact their local Extension office with gardening questions
- 100% were more motivated to use The Learning Store
- 50% were more motivated to grow some of their own produce

One participant shared, *"even though I've gardened for years I'm learning. I would highly recommend this program."*

# WCMGV IMPACT

## 42

Active Wood County  
Master Gardener  
Volunteers

## 825

Hours of continuing  
education completed by  
WCMGV

## 1783

Individuals impacted by  
WCMGV outreach efforts

## 2000+

Hours of volunteer service  
completed by WCMGV

## \$54,481

Value of WCMGV  
volunteer contributions\*

\*based on the value of \$27.20 per hour for volunteer time in WI for 2020, according to Independent Sector



# Horticulture

## Foundations in Horticulture

A team of Extension Educators with Horticulture and Master Gardener duties in Brown, Iron, Marathon, Rock, Walworth, Waukesha, Winnebago, and Wood counties, developed Foundations in Horticulture (FIH) online course in cooperation with the Horticulture and Master Gardener Programs.

Foundations in Horticulture addresses the following needs:

- *Increase consumer access to horticulture education*
- *Improve and provide consistent horticulture education training to prospective Master Gardener Volunteers*
- *Reduce the burden of Master Gardener training to staff that don't have primary duties in Horticulture or Master Gardener programs*
- *Provide online programming to appeal to wider audiences, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic*



FIH was developed using Universal Design for Learning Principles and Canvas, the online learning management system for UW-Madison, allowing for an engaging distance learning environment for adults with varied learning preferences and digital literacy.

Extension Educators collaboratively developed specific learning objectives and repurposed education materials from Master Gardener Level 1 Training. Topics selected provide the learner with fundamental knowledge of Wisconsin horticulture with an emphasis in integrated pest management.

Foundations in Horticulture is being piloted in four counties with total of 144 participants during fall/winter 2020-2021. Upon completion, participants will demonstrate an increase in knowledge about Wisconsin horticulture and be prepared to enroll in Master Gardener Volunteer Onboarding if desired. The results of the pilot will also be used to make improvements to FIH and train other educators on how to facilitate the course. The intent is to explore expanding access to statewide audiences, making FIH available to the public and not just prospective Master Gardener Volunteers.

## The Garden Guru

Wood County Master Gardeners began 2020 with monthly horticulture programs called The Garden Guru at the Everett Roehl Marshfield Public Library.

Beginning in March, The Garden Guru programming nimbly adapted to a virtual format using the Zoom platform. Volunteers remained committed to their mission, which is to share evidence-based horticulture knowledge with their communities. The virtual programs' following grew, with programs averaging 30 participants each month in the last quarter of the year. The programs also strengthened community partnerships with the library.



# Human Development & Relationships

*Jackie Carattini, Human Development & Relationships Educator*

## Mental Health and Well Being

Extension works with local leaders to create healthier communities. We apply the research and resources of UW-Madison to help:

- Promote positive mental health by teaching skills to manage stress more effectively, practice self-care and reduce risky substance use by youth and adults
- Build community skills, tools and resources to promote health

### **Highlights of Taking Care of You**

One program that addresses the need of teaching self-care and stress reduction is Highlights of Taking Care of You.

An 8-session series of Highlights of Taking Care of You, where childcare providers learned skills to cope with stress in both their work and home lives. The series was presented in partnership with United Way of South Wood and Adams Counties and Childcaring, Inc. Over the 8 sessions, 24 participants were able to participate via Zoom to learn skills to cope with stress. 96% of participants reported learning new coping skills including breathing, gratitude and finding joy.

A 3-session Taking Care of You series was also held at SWEPS (South Wood Emerging Pantry Shelf) where participants learned about the impacts of stress on their health and developed strategies to manage their stress in healthy ways. At the completion of the program, the nine participants had identified healthy ways to reduce their stress. Participants were able to demonstrate using tools such as breathing, guided relaxation and making joy lists.

Additional programming on managing stress was provided to organizations such as the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central WI, Childcaring and United Way of South Wood and Adams counties. In addition to full educational series, materials were adapted for one day staff in-services, newsletters, radio segments and public service announcements.

**302**

Partners engaged

**323**

Virtual education sessions hosted

**1,223**

PSAs on WLJY and WFHR radio stations

**1,000+**

Views of 4 recorded educational videos





# Human Development & Relationships

## Maintaining Community Partnerships

Extension Wood County partnered with United Way of South Wood and Adams Counties to reach their community coalitions and partners to provide a weekly online educational program. The goal of the weekly meetings was to touch base with each other, maintain community relationships and gain mental health tools for working in a crisis situation.

An average of 6 participants attended each week for 12 weeks reporting that they were able to learn and implement new coping skills around stress management and self-care. At the end of the 12 weeks the meetings were continued within each agency.

These existing relationships allowed us to expand our outreach and work with these community partners to maintain relationships in order to help staff transition to work in the era of COVID-19 and to maintain mental health.

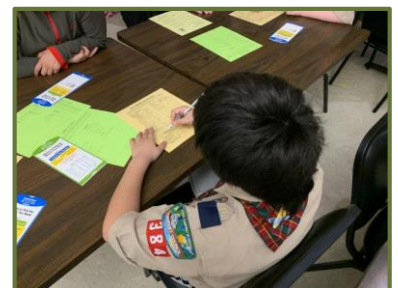
## Increasing Financial Capability in Youth

Wood County partners and organizations continue to identify financial security as a challenge. The United Way of South Wood and Adams Counties' Financial Stability Coalition continues to focus on the need for promoting financial capability in youth. To address these issues two new programs were implemented in 2020.

In February of 2020, the first Wisconsin Rapids Finance and Investment Challenge Bowl was held at Mid-State Technical College with teams from six local schools. The FICB is a financial literacy program for Wisconsin high school students. It aims to teach a wide range of financial literacy topics that align with Wisconsin's Model Academic Standard for Personal Finance. Two Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln High Schools teams won first and second place. Due to its success, it is planned to be an annual event.

A new partnership was developed with the Samoset Council, Boy Scouts of America in Marshfield. We held a "Funny Money Night" for local scouts in the Marshfield area. The purpose of "Funny Money Night" was to help them learn about money, career choices and budgeting basics. The key concepts taught were: jobs and income, building a budget, and distinguishing needs versus wants.

We had 17 youth in attendance along with their families and their leaders. One mother stated, "This is great! We have been working on budgeting at home but your stations make it fun and easier to understand! We will definitely continue to work on this at home!"



*A participant at the Boy Scouts' "Funny Money Night".*





# Natural Resources

*Rachael Whitehair, Regional Natural Resource Educator*

## Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo

The Central Wisconsin Farm Profitability Expo was created to revive the effort dedicated to creating the 'Healthy Soil, Healthy Water' workshops held in years past. This revived effort included multiple stakeholders and strived to re-brand the event and shift the focus of programming from one of soil and water health to one of profitability while achieving soil and water health.



The expo was originally planned to be a single day event, however, the planning committee shifted to a virtual learning series to accommodate for the COVID-19 pandemic. Keynote speaker Rick Clark, a regenerative farmer from Indiana, kicked off the event in early December with additional presentations planned in 2021, to cover the financial components of best management practices like cover crops, no till, precision agriculture, managed grazing, and silvopasture. The event provided intentional opportunities for farmer-farmer discussion on best methods to make conservation profitable here in Central Wisconsin.

## 14-Mile Watershed Alliance

The 14 Mile Watershed Committee began as a sub-committee of the Tri-Lakes Association, appointed to address compromised water quality in the form of algal blooms in Lakes Arrowhead, Camelot, and Sherwood. Opportunities to hold in-person meetings ceased as a result of the pandemic, thus, Extension offered virtual hosting through the Zoom platform. This partnership sparked a strong period of growth for the committee. Ongoing virtual meetings continued alongside a successful effort to develop a 9 Key Element Watershed Restoration Plan for the 14-Mile area, a guide for the committee's mission. UW-Madison Extension offered facilitation of discussions with area water and agricultural specialists, as well as guidance with grant development and submission for continued water monitoring projects.



**239**

Attendees at the Farm Profitability Expo events

**3,867**

Contacts reached through Facebook and YouTube social media platforms

**40**

Percent of Profitability Expo registrants who identified as farmers

**6**

Educational videos made with partners, showcasing farmers and land conservation practices

**6**

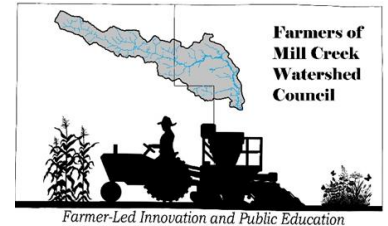
Ongoing farmer led or watershed group partnerships



# Natural Resources

## Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council

The Farmers of Mill Creek Watershed Council is dedicated to community education and outreach as a pillar of their programmatic goals. In early 2020, a partnership between Land and Water and UW-Madison Extension, developed what is known as The Pollinator Pledge. The pledge is a community-based program meant to transform unproductive acres of land within or near the Mill Creek Watershed into beneficial prairie habitat for pollinators and erosion control for soil and water quality.



Producers and conservation staff offer hands-on activities to students about prairie ecosystems. For every school that signs up, the Farmer Council matches their participation with a prairie installation. The pollinator pledge brings classrooms to the farm and makes the prairie site an outdoor learning space for the community. The goals of this program include:

- plant a minimum of ten sites, either school-based or agricultural land, into prairie habitat
- host four field day demonstrations to exemplify options for prairie implementation
- increase prairie acres on farmland to mitigate nutrient loss and improve ecosystem function
- educate the community about the benefits of incorporating native habitat into the landscape.

Due to the pandemic, all in-school presentations were halted. During 2020, three sites were successfully planted (example shown at right), and one used for two school field trips. The program intends to continue through the 2021-2022 seasons.



*One of three sites successfully planted as a prairie site for outdoor learning.*

## An Ear-Full of Conservation Stories

To accommodate for the lack of in-person field days, Mill Creek farmers, UW-Madison Extension, and Land and Water Departments developed a series of education videos to showcase the best management practices being utilized in the area as well as the farmers implementing them. The video series called “An Ear Full: Hearing from the farmers leading the conservation conversation” provides firsthand experiences of how local farmers make these practices work, the challenges they’ve had, and ultimately, share the good it has done for their operation and what being a good steward of the land means to them.



# Positive Youth Development

Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator

## Lumberjacks: Building Your Future Camp in a Box

Summer camp looked a little different in 2020. We introduced Camp in a Box – a hybrid summer camp program featuring written curriculum with project materials, static video instructions, and virtual campfires to develop positive relationships for youth in grades K-13 and their families. The goal was to deepen familial relationships and experience hands-on education while engaging in camp-like programs from their homes. To support campers, instructional videos were shared; live “campfires” including guest speakers, interactive games and songs were hosted on Zoom; and a closed Facebook community was created allowing families to share camp experiences. Older youth served as leaders - developing instructional videos, leading campfire songs, and facilitating other campfire activities.

The program included three camp days and included activities on Arts & Crafts, Astronomy, Mindfulness, STEAM, Group and Water-Based Recreation, Physical Education, Camp Cooking, Music, and Career Considerations.

Lumberjacks: Building Your Future Camp in a Box served approximately 1,000 youth from about 400 families. 4-H educators from 8 counties collaboratively created this family-focused experience to meet traditional camp goals. Twenty five percent of camp families were non-traditional 4-H families who experienced camp for the first time. This program was awarded the 2020 Specialty Award for Excellence in Camping-Team by the Wisconsin Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals.



From top left counterclockwise: Campers were encouraged to name their camp; retiring the flag; making cloud dough; owl pellet dissection; meal time fun

# 631

Youth members enrolled

# 35

Percent of enrolled youth live on farms

# 47

Percent of enrolled youth live in rural areas

# 18

Percent of enrolled youth live in cities of 10K+

# 153

Certified adult volunteers

# 6,152

Hours of volunteer service

# \$167,334

Value of total volunteer hours\*



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\*based on the value of \$27.20 per hour for volunteer time in WI for 2020, according to the Nonprofit Leadership Center



# Positive Youth Development

## Keeping Youth Connected

### ***Youth Leaders Organize Special Interest Clubs***

Youth leaders in Wood County 4-H accepted the challenge to keep youth connected and learning by creating special online clubs focused on a common interest.

In Lego Club, youth learn building techniques, get challenges and share their builds with each other. Art Club gives youth an opportunity to share their art work – both incomplete and complete, share new ideas and a common interest in art.

Both clubs are open to youth of all ages and meet weekly via Zoom or Google Meet. In addition to sharing their weekly challenge or creation, youth receive feedback on their work, have fun and meet new people. One parent shared “Thank you! Peter loves these meetings. He works on the task all week and can't wait for the meeting to come.”

### ***Pen Pal Project***

In March, five Wisconsin counties combined efforts to facilitate a Pen Pal Project for youth in grades K-3. Based on the Flat Stanley Project, an international literacy and communications pen pal activity based on the book Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown, we introduced youth to the story during a read-a-long via Zoom and all participants then received a journal and a Flat Stanley/Stella template to complete. They mailed their journal and character through USPS to another participant and the recipient then shared adventures with Flat Stanley/Stella and journaled about their adventures. At the end, each journal and Flat Stanley/Stella were returned to their creators.

Through this project, youth were able to practice reading, writing, planning and record-keeping skills in order to create and build new relationships.



*A Pen Pal Project participant with Flat Stella*

### ***County-wide Cloverbud Program***

Cloverbuds are our youngest 4-H members, in grades K-2. Many times, the virtual meeting platform makes it difficult for them to be engaged and actively participate.

In order to ensure that these important 4-Hers are learning and staying connected, a county-wide Cloverbud program was created. This club meets virtually once a month. Upon registration, members received a Cloverbud Record Book in the mail that includes all of the hands-on lessons and activities for each meeting. New youth are able to join at any time.



# Extension

## UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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