



NEWS FROM EXTENSION

UW-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION WOOD COUNTY



Learning Life Skills at River Cities High School

by Jackie Carattini, Human Development and Relationships Educator

During the late part of the 2021-22 school year, Extension was approached by one of the teachers at River Cities High School inquiring about a collaboration to teach their students basic life skills. Starting in September of 2022 with the start of the 2022-23 school year, Jackie Carattini Human Development & Relationships educator along with Hannah Wendels, FoodWise Nutrition educator started monthly programming in the school. The pair goes once a month for both the morning and afternoon sessions at River Cities. All students in the school are encouraged to attend and are all gathered together for the sessions. The goal of the program is to give students basic skills to put into practice once they are living on their own.

The sessions are split into two portions. Miss Wendels has a focus on basic food preparation and cooking skills. The students are learning to read recipes, measure, basic knife skills and beginning skills for basic food preparation and food safety. Each month a topic is introduced and demonstrated and the students participate in an activity to practice the skill introduced. Then additional challenges and tasks are proposed for the remainder of the month for the students to practice the skills learned. The following month all students who turn in the additional tasks are entered to win prizes that pertain to the skills. Prizes have included items to stock their own kitchens once they are on their own.

The second portion of the monthly series is offered by Carattini. She began the school year by introducing monthly budgets and having the students create their own based on what they would anticipate needing once living independently. The students have now moved into the Rent Smart curriculum. It is 6 sessions that provide basic landlord/tenant knowledge and skills. The goal is to prepare the students to be successful tenants. This includes being financially prepared to afford a rental unit, knowing the basic landlord/tenant laws in Wisconsin, and how to be prepared to fill out a rental application and eventually a lease. Other skills covered include how to keep your rental property clean, who is responsible for basic repairs and how to prevent eviction. In order to be prepared

to fill out applications we cover the tools that landlords use to rank the risk of a possible tenant. We encourage all participants to utilize the tools to know what a landlord "might" find out. One of the tools is by obtaining a copy of their credit report to look for errors and possible identity theft. Unfortunately, young adults are one of the rising areas of identity fraud as adults in their life are using their social security numbers to obtain credit. In February, 59 students were able to obtain copies of their credit reports. In March, we will go through them as a group to look for errors and attempt to correct them. If students are able to complete all 6 sessions they can qualify for the Rent Smart certificate which some landlords will use as a positive reference. This is beneficial for those starting out with no rental history in a very tight rental economy.

In Person Programming Returns to FOCUS

(Feeding Our Communities with United Services)

by Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

Janell Wehr, Wood County Horticulture Educator, is teaming up with FoodWise educator, Hannah Wendels, and Jackie Carattini, Human Development & Relationships educator, to provide in person programming at FOCUS. Each Tuesday for the first three weeks each month will have a theme. The first Tuesday is Therapeutic Horticulture. Nutrition classes are provided on the second Tuesday, and Financial Wellness on the third Tuesday.

Gardeners know that playing with plants is good for the soul. Now research is backing these claims. The simple act of caring for plants can lead to reduced perception of stress, as people gain satisfaction from nurturing and being accountable to a living organism. By providing them a way to channel their stress, gardening can lead to developing positive coping mechanisms against daily frustrations. Evidence shows that working with plants can be therapeutic for individuals impacted by trauma, as well, helping them improve their psychological state. For more information on the benefits of horticulture on well-being, please visit: <https://ellisonchair.tamu.edu/health-and-well-being-benefits-of-plants/>

The therapeutic horticulture programming at FOCUS aims to support positive mental well-being and socialization for participating clients, by engaging them in suitable activities designed to be easily replicated at home. Gardening can bring people together and provide an opportunity for participants to connect with one another, regardless of their background or circumstances. This can lead to the formation of positive relationships and a stronger sense of community in the surrounding area. Participating in a shared activity like gardening can foster a sense of belonging and help to break down social barriers, as individuals work together towards a common goal. This can be especially important for individuals who may be struggling with poverty or food insecurity, as they may feel isolated and disconnected from their community.

Janell kicked off programming with Growing new plants with kitchen scraps. This month, Janell demonstrated multiple plants that can be regrown from kitchen scraps, from celery and green onion bottoms, to pineapple tops and ginger rhizomes. Janell explained that while you may be able to use some of the plants in cooking (green onions for example), most of the plants would be for the fun of growing interesting houseplants, like the avocado pits and carrot tops. After the demonstration, participants were given kits, complete with instructions, and kitchen scraps to take home and experiment with. Participants were then encouraged to ask questions on all horticulture related topics. The FOCUS participants were eager with questions, and one participant even remarked, "I've learned 50 new things this afternoon!"

Janell is looking forward to the March 7th program, when she will introduce Microgreens to the participants. Participants will learn how they can grow microgreens in even the smallest of circumstances.

Upcoming Extension Programs

- **4-H Project Discovery Day** | Saturday, February 18
- **4-H Foodie: Tacos** | Thursday, February 23 6-7pm | South Wood County YMCA
- **Let's Create: Watercolor Book** | Tuesday, February 21 6-7pm
- **FOCUS: Nutrition** | Tuesday, February 14 - 3-4pm
- **FOCUS: Financial Wellness** | Tuesday, February 21 - 3-4pm
- **FOCUS: Horticulture** | March 7 - 3-4pm
- **Rent Smart** | Friday, March 3 - 9:30am-12:30pm | McMillan Memorial Library
- **Rent Smart** | Friday, March 10 - 9:30am-12:30pm | Everett Roehl Public Library
- **Strongbodies** | Tuesdays & Thursdays, January 31-April 20 - 9-10:15am

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