



NEWS FROM EXTENSION

UW-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION WOOD COUNTY



Members of the Wood County REDI Roundtable spend a beautiful summer day touring the South Wood County Airport-Alexander Field with Airport Manager, Jeremy Sickler.

Ready for REDI!

Implementing Wood County's Economic Development Strategy

by Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Educator

2023 was a busy year for community economic development in Wood County. Jason Grueneberg, Wood County's Planning & Zoning Director, and I began forming implementation teams to bring [Wood County's REDI Plan](#) (Rural Economic Development Initiative) off the shelf and into practice.

This effort began with a core group of stakeholders (many of whom were engaged in the original REDI process in 2019) forming the [REDI Roundtable](#). This is a "collaborative economic development collaborative group" whose creation is outlined as the very first goal of the REDI plan. Goal accomplished! ✓

Following REDI formation, an additional four implementation teams were launched to tackle the plan's priority areas.

1. Broadband / Digital Equity Solutions Team (DEST)
2. Child Care Task Force
3. Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee (EESC)
4. Housing Task Force
5. (Launching in 2024) Marketing & Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Team

We are fortunate that these teams are comprised of more than 100 individuals across Wood County. Team members provide subject matter expertise, passion, and drive to help us achieve our goals. More than 30 team meetings were held in 2023 with members providing a combined 300+ hours of their time to REDI implementation.

To make it easy to track progress and stay up to date with meeting minutes and details, we created the [Wood County REDI Activity Dashboard](#). The dashboard provides up to date meeting notices, rosters, and meeting minutes.

Our efforts in 2023 provided the foundation – we organized ourselves and charted our goals. In 2024 the real work begins. Expect to see a lot of activity from these teams including a Wood County Housing Summit, a Homegrown workshop focused on building and strengthening our entrepreneurial network, and implementation of Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) goals.

We invite you to join us! All meetings and teams are open to new perspectives and community residents who are passionate about “establishing Wood County as a vibrant and diverse community in which to live, grow, work, and play.” To learn more, visit <https://wood.extension.wisc.edu/> or contact me, Kayla Rombalski, at krombalski@wisc.edu.



2024 REDI Meetings

REDI Roundtable
 bimonthly, 2nd Thursday at 9:30
 JAN 11 • MAR 14 • MAY 9 • JUL 11 • SEP 12 • NOV 14

Broadband/Digital Equity Solutions Team
 monthly, 3rd Thursday at 9:30 AM
 JAN 18 • FEB 15 • MAR 21 • APR 18 • MAY 16 • JUN 20
 JUL 18 • AUG 15 • SEPT 19 • OCT 17 • NOV 21 • DEC 19

Child Care Task Force
 bimonthly, 1st Thursday at 1 PM
 JAN 4 • MAR 7 • MAY 2 • JUL 11 • SEP 5 • NOV 7

Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee
 2024 meetings TBD
 TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD • TBD

Housing Task Force
 Monthly, 4th Tuesday at 10 AM
 JAN 23 • FEB 27 • MAR 26 • APR 23 • MAY 28 • JUN 25
 JUL 23 • AUG 27 • SEP 24 • OCT 22 • NOV 26 • DEC 17

Marketing Team & Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure
 Coming soon

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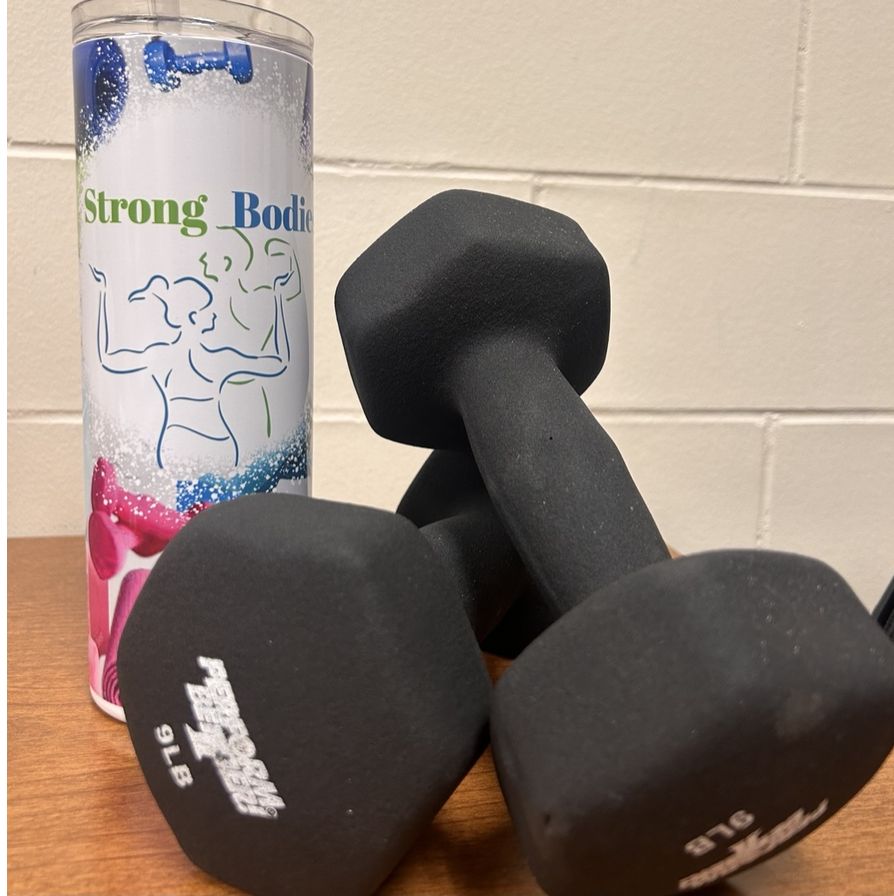
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Nekoosa StrongBodies

A Program to a Healthier and Happier You!

by Hannah Wendels, FoodWise Nutrition Educator

StrongBodies, a weight training and healthy eating program, has had great success in Wood County for a full year! Starting in October 2022, FoodWise Nutrition Educator Hannah started a 10-week StrongBodies series at the Nekoosa Area Community Center.

The first series saw a total of 20 participants. With an incredible amount of interest from the community, Hannah held a 12-week series in January 2023 that had to be capped off and had a waitlist created with 28 community members in the class! Now, in its third 12-week series, there are 30 participants in the class and a waitlist of an additional 10 participants with more interest growing as the series comes to a close.

As the current series is coming to an end, Hannah has been having conversations with Extension colleagues, community organizations, and current StrongBodies participants about becoming trained StrongBodies leaders to continue the class in the future. This program thrives across the entire state of Wisconsin and many of the classes are led by past participants who become trained in StrongBodies to lead classes in their communities. Having local community members become StrongBodies leaders allows Extension staff to sustain and support a program in one area of the community and then focus efforts on creating another strong program in another area. Hannah is continuously thinking of how to grow the reach of this program to help everyone have access to a free or low-cost exercise program in Wood County.

The StrongBodies program has been shown to increase bone density and muscle strength as well as balance. In addition to helping improve one's physical fitness, this program also taps into the social side of wellness by bringing people together. The socialization of this program is

unmatched. To see participants come with their friends or meet new friends because of this class is so inspiring and is such a powerful and positive impact that this program can have on someone's life. I have watched participants make strong friendships that start in this class and are strengthened and maintained outside of class. Participants share with me that they meet up for breakfast each week, grab a coffee, attend local craft fairs together, share photos of grandchildren and stories with each other during class, and encourage one another to show up and participate because they want each other to succeed during class and have the benefits of regular strength training and healthy eating carry over into their everyday lives.

StrongBodies is so much more than a physical fitness program. While we all know that increasing our physical activity, strengthening our bones, muscles and working on our balance is so important in our lives especially as we age... feeling socially connected in your community is also vital to one's overall well-being. Continuing to grow StrongBodies in Wood County remains a priority for me! If you are interested in how the class works - reach out to Hannah for more information or how to join a class in the future!

Upcoming Extension Programs

- **4-H: Art Gallery** | New Visions | Open through January 5
- **4-H Teen Winter Camp** | Rosholt Lions Camp | February 16-18
- **Planning AHEAD** | Zoom | Jan. 15, 22, 29, Feb. 5, 12, 19 & 26 - 1-2pm
- **Rent Smart** | Marshfield Public Library | January 4 - 1-4pm
- **Rent Smart** | McMillan Library | January 5 - 9:30am-12:30pm
- **StrongBodies** | Nekoosa Community Center | T & Tr through Dec. 21

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