

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | August 2024



Summer 2024: Aging Mastery Series in Marshfield

by Jackie Carattini, Human Development and Relationships Educator

The Aging Mastery Program is a comprehensive, fun and engaging education and behavior change curriculum that celebrates the gift of longevity and helps participants plan to get the most out of their lives. Central to the AMP philosophy is that modest lifestyle changes can produce impactful results and participants can be empowered to cultivate healthy choices.

The AMP program is a national program from the National Council on Aging. UW-Madison Division of Extension previously had funding to offer the program and purchase the materials but that funding ended in 2023. In the spring of 2024, Jackie Carattini, Human Development and Relationships Educator in Wood County was approached by a new partner in Marshfield looking for educational programs for older adults and adults with disabilities. Carattini was able to partner with the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Central WI to secure funding to purchase the books and materials needed to run the program at no cost to participants. The 10 session series began in June 2024 and ran throughout the summer. 6-10 participants attended each session and completed the hands on activities. The 10 sessions covered:

- **Navigating Longer Lives:** The Basics of Aging Mastery: Introduction to the program and its philosophy with a special emphasis on the new realities of aging, making the most of the gift of longevity, and taking small steps to improve health, financial well-being, social connectedness, and overall quality of life.
- **Exercise and You:** Discussion of the importance of exercising both the mind and the body with a focus on strategies for incorporating meditation, aerobics, strengthening, flexibility, and balance into daily routines.
- **Sleep:** Overview of how sleep patterns change as we age, the importance of monitoring the sleep cycle, and simple strategies to improve sleep.
- **Healthy Eating and Hydration:** Review of nutrition as it relates to aging with a focus on strategies for incorporating healthy eating and hydration into daily routines.
- **Financial Fitness:** Introduction to strategies for remaining economically secure in an era of longevity with an emphasis on setting financial goals and setting financial boundaries with friends and families.
- **Advance Planning:** Guidance around key steps needed to manage health care, financial, and housing/care decisions with a focus on considering the role of personal values and beliefs in these decisions.
- **Healthy Relationships:** Exploration of the benefits of being socially active, as well as the risks of isolation with a focus on practical strategies for continuing to build and strengthen friendships and family connections as we age.
- **Medication Management:** Best practices on how to take medications as directed, how to store medications safely, and how to keep track of multiple medications.
- **Community Engagement:** Introduction to the value of continuing contribution and small acts of kindness with a focus on identifying personal aptitudes for meaningful volunteer and civic opportunities.
- **Falls Prevention:** Overview of the importance of falls prevention among older adults along with strategies to prevent falling.

Participants have reported: increased social connectedness, increased physical activity, increased awareness of healthy eating and drinking habits, completing advance directives. One participant stated, "This class is great! It's not necessarily new information but a great reminder of what I need to do. Having others here together keeps me motivated and more likely to follow through."

Shaping Our Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Wood County's efforts to support small business growth and entrepreneurial success

by Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Educator



Photo: Jen Oswald, owner of Mission Coffee House-Wisconsin Rapids, speaks about her entrepreneurial journey to attendees of a program called "Homegrown" hosted by the EESC in April 2024.

Supporting thriving entrepreneurs and small businesses is a focus of Wood County's economic development strategy. The Wood County Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee has spearheaded some exciting developments that support aspiring or emerging entrepreneurs.

The Wood County CEED Committee recently approved the release of REDI funds to provide a scholarship for interested residents to enroll in Mid-State Technical College's "Entrepreneurial Foundations" course for free. This eight-week, one credit course delves into the components of a startup business plan, including comparing ways of going into business as well as developing marketing, legal, financial, products/services, management, and operations plans. The course is offered in a variety of formats (online, in-person, hybrid) and participants can enroll for a session starting as soon as mid-August.

The scholarship covers the \$170 tuition cost, and Wood County has provided funds for 30+ entrepreneurs to take the course over the next year. We anticipate this will be a great starting point for those who have a business idea but need a little guidance to take it to the next level. Learn more, apply for the scholarship, and enroll in the course at <https://www.mstc.edu/entrepreneur-scholarship>.

Wood County and Mid-State Technical College are also partnering to host The First Pitch, an idea contest on Thursday, October 3, 2024, from 5-7PM at Mid-State Technical College in Wisconsin Rapids (500 32nd St N). This low-stakes ideas contest is perfect for an aspiring entrepreneur with a napkin idea and a dream. Participants have one minute and one slide to pitch their business idea. Audience participation chooses which five entrepreneurs take home \$100. We hope you will join us for this event!

In addition to these Wood County programs, we are actively partnering on regional efforts as well. An [Entrepreneurship and Placemaking Workshop](#) will be held on Monday, October 7, 2024 for stakeholders in Portage, Marathon and Wood Counties. Attendees will use the "Strategic Doing" framework to map out strategic goals and action steps to bolster the region's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

For more information on any of the programs described here, or to join the Wood County Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Steering Committee, contact Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Extension Educator – krombalski@wisc.edu or 715-421-8445.