

# NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | January 2025



## 2024 Groundwater Education in Wood County

by Jen McNelly, Natural Resources Groundwater Educator

Groundwater is a vital resource for Wood County. It provides all domestic drinking water to local residents and supports major industries and business including agriculture. Because of its importance, groundwater and drinking water has been a focus of educational programming for groups and community organizations throughout Central WI, including Wood County. In 2024, the Natural Resources Educators of Wood County worked with a variety of partners to provide groundwater education programming in both formal and informal educational settings throughout the County.

In April educators were able to work with a homeschool cooperative in the Marshfield area to provide hands on lessons to students ages pre-K to junior high and adults on what an aquifer was, and how groundwater and potential contaminants move through different soils in the aquifer. Participants had the opportunity to make “aquifers in a cup” to take home with them. A similar program on aquifers was also held with a local Cloverbud 4-H group in April.

In September, the 14 Mile Creek Watershed alliance worked with educators and other professionals to put on a water field day event for Nekoosa High School students. Students were able to rotate through hands-on learning stations to talk about groundwater using the groundwater model, best management practices effects on surface and groundwater using an Enviroscope model, identified aquatic plants and learned about healthy shorelands.

In October, educators attended Lincoln High School to teach two sections of Natural Resources students about groundwater and drinking water contamination issues in Wood County. They learned about aquifers and how groundwater moved through different soils using the groundwater model and discussed the importance of water testing.

October also brought the Science by the River event to Wood County which provided numerous opportunities for residents of all ages to learn about a wide variety of water topics including fisheries, water quality testing, soils, conservation practices and more.

Teachers and program attendee’s have complimented UW-Extension Natural Resources Educators on providing “fun, interactive, hands-on learning activities that keep students engaged in learning about water resources and conservation”. We are excited to continue these efforts into 2025, with hopes to expand. If you know of or are interested in water related educational programming, please feel free to reach out to Natural Resources Educators in Wood County at the information listed below.

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# Wood County 4-H is Growing to Serve New Audiences

by *Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator*

The year 2024 was a year of change for Wood County 4-H. We were sorry to say goodbye to 4-H Associate Educator Jasmine Carbajal. While she was here, she developed the Tools to Thrive Program for students within Marshfield Middle and High Schools and built the Juntos Family Engagement Series for Latine families. Both of these programs have filled a huge void for local Spanish-speaking families. Jasmine accepted a different job within UW Madison Extension's Positive Youth Development Program and that left us searching for a way to support the youth and families that she served so generously.

We were so fortunate to welcome Olga Meza to the team in September 2024 to pick up where Jasmine left off. Olga is a bilingual and bicultural 4-H Associate Educator with a half-time appointment. She has completed an 8-week Tools to Thrive series at Marshfield High School and facilitated two family nights for Latine families in Marshfield. She will start her first Juntos program this winter. The work that Jasmine started and Olga continues is critically important to Wood County. Our local economy depends on immigrant labor, and our futures depend on a well-educated workforce. Both Tools to Thrive and Juntos help students and families understand the importance of high school graduation and options for after graduation. In 2024, Olga worked with one young man who was ready to drop out as soon as he turned 18. After sitting down together, Olga helped him discover how close he was to graduation. He had already given up, and with her help, he will graduate.

In 2024, Wood County 4-H started to benefit from help from AmeriCorps members. AmeriCorps can be compared to a domestic Peace Corps. Members serve their communities through all sorts of different programs. The 4-H partnership with AmeriCorps allows us to reach new audiences through partnerships with local libraries, schools, and other youth organizations. Malina Carattini served with us until August 2024. In January 2025, we are excited to welcome Trina Bores.

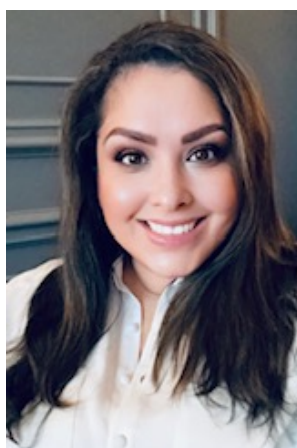
Trina grew up in Wood County 4-H and graduated out of Snyder 4-H Club. She is a sophomore (with junior standing) at UW-River Falls. She's majoring in Elementary Education, though she's considering a career with Extension. While she's in school, Trina will be working on hands-on educational opportunities that youth can explore at home or in community groups. These "Take & Learn" kits will be offered free of charge to youth throughout the county, and we'll be relying on our community partners to help us spread the word.

We believe in 4-H's hands-on, experiential learning methods. We also believe that the more youth that we can help explore and learn about the world, the better our future will be. Watch for information about our upcoming Take & Learn opportunities in Youth Connections (Wood County 4-H monthly newsletter) and on our social media pages. You'll find us on both Instagram and Facebook. Or, feel free to stop in at the Extension office anytime!

## 2025 Wood County 4-H Team



**Laura Huber**  
4-H Program Educator



**Olga Meza**  
Bilingual 4-H Associate Educator



**Trina Bores**  
4-H AmeriCorps member