

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

Wood County | November 2025



4-H Updates

by Laura Huber, 4-H Program Educator

4-H'ers Travel to Washington DC

Last week, I had the great pleasure of travelling to Washington DC with 27 area 4-H'ers. This experience, designed specifically for middle and high school students, is called DC Learning Journeys and its goal is to bring civics to life. Herb Kohl Philanthropies funds this travel opportunity to provide young people with a "front-row seat to civics in action."

DC Learning Journeys help youth understand how government functions, what democracy means, and the roles that engaged citizens play in a representative democracy. This year, our travel took place during the government shutdown, which limited our access to some federal institutions, while allowing us to talk about what happens when communication breaks down.

We visited Arlington National Cemetery and laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, met Honor Flight Veterans at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, climbed the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and met Senator Baldwin in her office.

Youth delegates visit the US Capitol on the 2025 DC Learning Journeys experience



4-H'ers met with Senator Tammy Baldwin in her office during their DC Learning Journey.

Lakenna, one of our travelers, summarized the experience this way, "This trip was truly a blessing. It helped me see what our history has to do with the many decisions of our world today. It showed me a glimmer into a past that I have not seen nor experienced. This trip has helped me see why learning our history is so important. I don't think I have ever felt more connected to our past than I have here on this trip. I love how every experience truly shows us how our past has now bled into our future, creating laws and rules that our world follows now. This trip has shown me so many wonders and I am truly grateful for this experience."

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New 4-H After School Club at Pittsville Elementary School

Wood County 4-H is excited to expand and welcome a new club format *and* a new club. The Pittsville After School 4-H Club will meet during Pittsville Elementary School's after school program. Students will enjoy a snack after school, go to their club meeting, and then move on to another after school enrichment activity or homework time.

This club will be led by 4-H Program Educator Laura Huber, and will meet on a monthly basis. Like all 4-H programs, this club will be focused on hands-on learning in areas that members are most interested in.

Through this program, after school club 4-H'ers will build leadership skills, develop skills like communication and other life skills, and enjoy new discoveries with friends. Like all 4-H members, after school club members will be able to participate in all of the programs Wood County 4-H offers – from camps and Creative Arts Day to Project Discovery Day and travel adventures.

Pittsville After School 4-H Club will meet on the third Tuesday of each month. For more information on the Pittsville After School 4-H Club, contact Laura in the Extension office. For more information on Pittsville Elementary School's After School program, contact Ron Klein, Dean of Students.



Lasagna Love

Wood County 4-H is hosting a Lasagna Love program on Saturday, November 29th at McMillan Library to help feed families, spread kindness and strengthen communities.

4-H members pledge their hands to larger services and through this program will learn:

- *how to make a delicious homemade lasagna baked with love*
- *how we can spread a little sunshine for someone who's experiencing hard times*
- *how communities support one another, and where you can look for help when needed, too.*

The lasagnas prepared will be shared with families in the greater Wisconsin Rapids area who have expressed a need for help.

4-H families and members have already kicked off the program with generous donations of ingredients. The Extension office has a growing collection of supplies, as pictured below!



SPREAD THE LOVE
LASAGNA STYLE

Donate your time or supplies to help put together lasagnas for Lasagna Love!

Our Wishlist:
<https://bit.ly/4HLasagna>

Register by Nov 15!

🕒 10:30am-1:00pm
📍 McMillan Memorial Library
📅 **Saturday, Nov 29**

 
<https://bit.ly/lasagnalovereg>



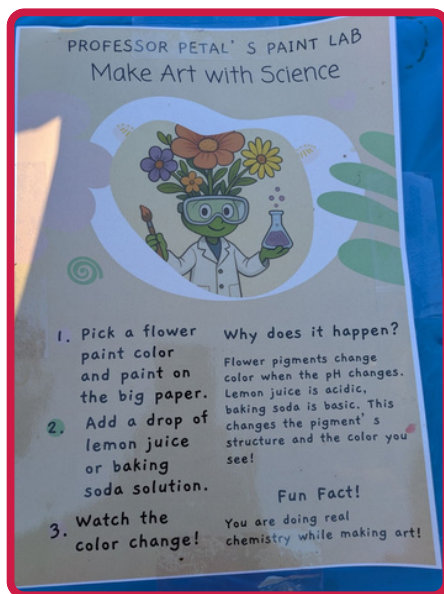
Professor Petal's Paint Lab Engages Hundreds at Science by the River

by Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

On October 18, over 300 attendees participated in **Professor Petal's Paint Lab**, a hands-on science activity featured at **Science by the River**, a free outdoor event held at Ben Hanson Park in Wisconsin Rapids. The event celebrated science and the outdoors through interactive discovery stations that connected participants to the Wisconsin River and a wide range of STEM fields. Organized by UW–Madison Extension Wood County, the event was part of the larger **Wisconsin Science Festival**, a statewide celebration of science and technology coordinated by UW–Madison.



Led by Janell Wehr, Extension Horticulture Educator, the Paint Lab invited participants to explore the chemistry of plant pigments using flower-based paints. Wehr prepared the pigments ahead of time, using flowers to create natural colorants stored in small containers. Participants used paintbrushes to apply the pigments to a large sheet of paper, then added drops of lemon juice or baking soda solution to observe real-time color changes. These reactions illustrated how pH affects pigment structure, offering a direct and engaging introduction to plant chemistry.



This year's activity marked a significant evolution from previous versions. For the first time, participants were invited to mix the reactive solutions themselves, adding an active learning component that increased engagement and ownership of the experiment. A parent noted appreciation for the improvement, commenting on how the pH experiment had grown from last year's version.

The station featured a whimsical character, Professor Petal, a quirky flower scientist with a bouquet for a head, who helped attract attention and spark curiosity. The setup encouraged participants to experiment freely, ask questions, and explore the science behind color and plants.

Professor Petal's Paint Lab exemplified how horticulture-themed programming can foster informal science education and community engagement. By combining chemistry, creativity, and plant-based materials, the activity made scientific concepts accessible and memorable for a broad audience. It was one of many stations at Science by the River that encouraged hands-on learning and highlighted opportunities to get involved with local science-based efforts.

