

NEWS FROM EXTENSION

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Community Demand Drives Success of Wood County Clean Sweep Events

Expanded to two annual events, the program is attracting more participants and diverting thousands of pounds of hazardous waste from waterways and the environment.

by Kayla Rombalski, Community Development Educator



Wood County's Clean Sweep program continues to demonstrate strong community demand and environmental impact. What began as a pilot effort to offer two collection events annually—one serving the north end of the county in Marshfield and one serving the south end in the Town of Saratoga—has proven highly successful. Participation and the amount of hazardous waste collected have increased dramatically in recent years, providing residents with convenient opportunities to safely dispose of materials that could otherwise threaten public health and natural resources.

What began as a pilot project has become an essential countywide service, helping hundreds of households safely dispose of hazardous materials each year.

The spring 2026 Clean Sweep event, held in Marshfield on May 30, attracted **183 households** and collected an impressive **12,272 pounds of hazardous waste** from residents across the County. While attendance was slightly lower than the record-setting 210 vehicles in 2025, the **total volume of waste collected actually increased** by more than 400 pounds, indicating that residents continue to rely on the program to properly dispose of larger quantities of hazardous materials.

In just two years, hazardous waste collected at the Marshfield event increased by more than 365%—from 2,640 pounds in 2024 to 12,272 pounds in 2026.

Residents brought a wide variety of materials to the event, including approximately 3,500 pounds of solvents and thinners, 2,525 pounds of pesticides and poisons, and 1,627 pounds of lead-based paints and oils. Proper collection and disposal of these materials helps prevent contamination of landfills, groundwater, streams, and other natural resources, while supporting a healthier environment for Wood County communities.

The growth in participation over the past three years illustrates the program's increasing value to Wood County residents. The Marshfield event collected 2,640 pounds of waste from just 51 vehicles in 2024. In 2025 participation surged to 210 vehicles and nearly 11,900 pounds of waste collected. In 2026, collection totals climbed even higher to more than 12,200 pounds. Household hazardous waste collected increased from just over 2,000 pounds in 2024 to more than 11,300 pounds in 2026.

Although approximately 80 percent of participants came from Marshfield-area zip codes, residents also traveled from communities throughout Wood County to take advantage of the service. This broad participation reinforces the importance of maintaining convenient collection opportunities in multiple locations.

With another Clean Sweep event scheduled for **September 12, 2026**, at Saratoga Town Hall, residents will once again have the opportunity to responsibly dispose of hazardous materials. The continued success of the two-event model demonstrates both strong public demand and Wood County residents' commitment to protecting local natural resources for future generations.

For more information, go to <https://wood.extension.wisc.edu/community-development/clean-sweep/>.



Growing Impact with Professional Development: Encouraging Financial Conversations

by Ben Eberlein, Human Development and Relationships Educator

Extension's educators bring a wealth of information and resources to community members in all corners of the state, making The Wisconsin Idea a reality. However, with the sheer number of individuals and families in-need, it would be impossible for Extension to reach everyone. Across the state, more than 600,000 people live below the federal poverty level, and over a million more struggle to meet the cost of living in their counties. Many individuals and families turn to social service agencies for assistance, which puts social workers, case managers, and other helping professionals on the front lines of supporting Wisconsin's most vulnerable populations.

When these professionals meet with clients, they often have teachable moments during which they can create discussions on critical financial topics. Unfortunately, however, most professionals working in these types of social service roles have never been trained how to talk with clients about financial topics like budgeting. To address this, Extension launched the Encouraging Financial Conversations curriculum in 2020, to provide case managers, social workers, and other front-line staff with a foundation of basic financial coaching strategies and increase their comfort in discussing financial topics with clients.

Encouraging Financial Conversations is a 6-session course that covers topics including financial capability, goal setting & maximizing income, spending, savings, borrowing, protecting financial information, and practicing financial conversations.

During May & June, Extension Wood County educator Ben Eberlein led a virtual Encouraging Financial Conversations series which was attended by over 100 professionals from eight different counties. According to post-course evaluation responses, 100% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that they feel more comfortable working with clients on financial matters, that they feel more prepared to bring up a financial topic with clients, and that they better understand the role they can take in working with clients on financial concerns.