



Connecting, Learning, and Celebrating Community Impact at the National Extension Conference

by Ka Zoua Thao, Bilingual Community Health Educator

At the end of September, I had the opportunity to attend the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFCS) Annual Session in Knoxville, TN. This conference brought together Extension professionals from across the United States, providing a valuable opportunity to connect with others, exchange ideas, learn from different experiences, and explore new ways to strengthen the work we do in our communities.

One of the highlights of my experience was representing UW-Madison, Division of Extension as our Hmong Planning AHEAD team received first place for the Central Region Mary W. Wells Memorial Award. The Mary W. Wells Memorial Diversity Award recognizes outstanding efforts and accomplishments of individual and/or teams in diversity and pluralism for any Extension FCS program or activity, including staff development, advisory councils, programs, etc. I was honored to accept this incredible recognition on behalf of our team, UW-Madison Division of Extension, and the individuals and families in Wood County whose lives have been positively impacted by this program.



Ka Zoua Thao accepting the Mary W. Wells Memorial Award.

Receiving this recognition was especially meaningful because it highlights the importance of culturally responsive programming and building relationships with the communities we serve. The Hmong Planning Ahead program is an example of how Extension can help address community needs through education, collaboration, and programming that respects and reflects the experiences of the people it serves. Knowing that this work is making a difference in the lives of individuals and families in Wood County makes this recognition even more special.

Throughout the conference, I was grateful for the opportunity to learn from other Extension professionals who are passionate about improving the well-being of individuals, families, and communities. Connecting with

colleagues from across the country reminded me of the value of sharing knowledge, learning from one another, and bringing ideas back home to strengthen our programs and services.



Attendees from Wisconsin at NEAFCS

I am proud of our Hmong Planning Ahead team and grateful to be part of UW-Madison Division of Extension-Wood County. This experience was a wonderful reminder that the work we do locally can have a meaningful impact, and it was an honor to see our team's efforts recognized on a national level. I returned home feeling inspired, appreciative, and motivated to continue serving out community and making a positive difference in the lives of those we work with.

The People Side of Farm Transitions

by Ben Eberlein, Human Development & Relationships Educator

In September, the Wisconsin Farm Center invited Extension's Human Development and Relationship Institute to present to state agricultural mediators during their annual professional development conference. The Wisconsin Farm Center identified a need for resources and strategies to address the family dynamics, communication challenges, and conflicts that frequently arise during farm succession and transition planning and reached out to Extension to provide support.

Extension educators Ben Eberlein and Alicia Utke delivered a presentation about University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Human Development & Relationships Institute resources, including Financial Wellness & Security, Family Engagement & Relationships, and Life Span programming with a focus on Planning AHEAD. The session explored the complex challenges involved with sensitive family dynamics and communication strategies relevant to farm transitions. The session was designed to help participants better understand the people side of farm transitions and learn about Extension resources that can support farm families throughout the planning process.

Participants engaged in discussion about common family dynamics that influence farm transition and succession planning and practiced applying Aikido Communication strategies to real-world scenarios. The session also highlighted opportunities for mediators to connect farm families with Extension resources that support communication, future planning, caregiving, and conflict management.

During the presentation, participants shared positive feedback and expressed interest in the resources and strategies presented. Additionally, attendees shared that the information increased their awareness of Human Development & Relationships programs, particularly Planning AHEAD, and explored communication approaches and family dynamics that can influence farm transition and succession conversations.

By strengthening mediators' knowledge of available resources and referral options, this effort helps build capacity to support farm families facing complex decisions related to succession, caregiving, aging, communication, and conflict. In the long term, increased awareness and use of these resources can contribute to more effective transition planning and stronger outcomes for Wisconsin farm families and rural communities.



StrongBodies is Coming to Marshfield

by Hannah Wendels Scott, Health & Well-being Educator

StrongBodies is coming to Marshfield! Join the Marshfield StrongBodies class this November and get on the path to a healthier you! The class focuses on low-impact exercises for adults of any age to help increase muscle mass, strength, bone density, balance, and agility. The class can also help reduce the risk for osteoporosis, diabetes, heart disease, and arthritis, and improve one's self-confidence, social connectedness, and overall well-being.

This twice-weekly series begins on Monday, November 16 and goes until January 27, from 3:00pm - 4:15pm at the 2nd Street Community Center. The class meets every Monday and Wednesday. Space is limited and pre-registration is required. StrongBodies is offered by Extension Wood County. To register for the class, call 715-421-8437. Stay healthy and strong all winter long with StrongBodies!

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JOIN THE STRONGBODIES PROGRAM!

Health Benefits of Regular Strength Training:

- Increases balance & agility
- Increases muscle mass & strength
- Increases overall feelings of health & wellness
- Increases bone density
- Increases social connectedness
- Reduces risk for chronic illnesses

**MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS:
NOVEMBER 16, 2026 - JANUARY 27, 2027
3:00 - 4:15PM**

**2ND STREET COMMUNITY CENTER - DOLEZAL ROOM
211 E. 2ND STREET | MARSHFIELD**

**SPACE IS LIMITED!
PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED.**

THREE WAYS TO REGISTER!

- **CALL** Extension Wood County: 715-421-8437
- **CLICK** the link: <https://bit.ly/MFLDSB2026>
- **SCAN** the QR code:



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