

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

Table of Contents

Who are we	3
Administrative	4
Extension Program Areas	5
Agriculture	6
Wisconsin 4-H	10
Horticulture	13
Health & Well-Being	15
FoodWIse	16
Community Development	18

The Extension Education Committee provides oversight for Extension

Missy Christopherson, Chair, Heather Deluka, Vice-Chair, Amanda Babb, Jodi Lepsch and Kyle Johnson

Thank you for your continued support and guidance.

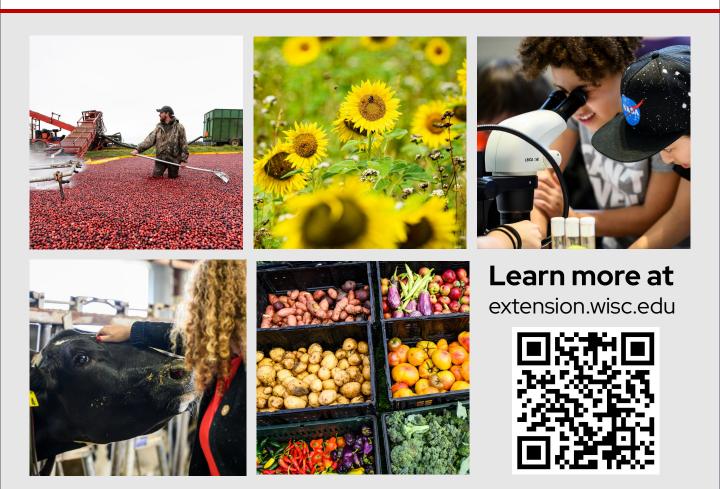
University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Eau Claire County

227 1st Street West Altoona, WI 54720 715-839-4712 | eauclaire.extension.wisc.edu UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

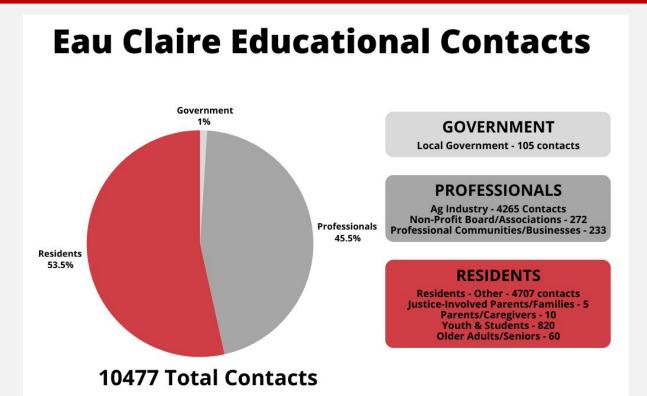
UW-Madison Extension's outreach creates key connection points for families, farms, businesses, nonprofit organizations, government, and more. We support local volunteers and leaders to take action and serve as role models in their communities, and we make sure Wisconsinites have the latest research, best practices, and educational opportunities.





Kristen Bruder Area Extension Director Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties "I am excited to have completed my first year as the Extension Director for Eau Claire. It is an honor to now serve in the community I have lived in with my husband and three children for over 20 years. The first year has been filled with a lot of learning, listening, and relationship building. I look forward to many more years!"

I am pleased to share the remarkable contributions of Extension in Eau Claire County in this report. Over the past year, Extension has remained committed to serving our community through education, outreach, and research-based initiatives. In agriculture, Extension has been a vital resource for farmers, offering the latest research-based information and technical assistance. In nutrition education, Extension has empowered individuals and families to make informed dietary choices, leading to improved health outcomes. Our 4-H program has positively impacted the lives of Eau Claire's youth, providing essential life skills and leadership opportunities. We shifted a program area, based on need, to address health outcomes, hiring a new Health and Well-Being Educator. Looking ahead to 2024, I am confident that Extension will continue to drive positive change in our county. Thank you for your ongoing support, and I look forward to our future accomplishments together.





My main work is assisting the 4-H Educator with her programming. I also assist the Ag and Horticulture Educators. I maintain our website.

I greet the people who walk in our office and test their pressure canner gauges, explain how to collect a soil sample for testing, sell plat books, and answer the many questions they may bring.



Kristi Peterson Outreach Support Associate

In 2023, I transitioned from county Office Coordinator position to UW-Madison Outreach Support Associate. This creates cohesion within Area 6 as well as access to all platforms. I look forward to expanding my capability to aid in programming and expanding outreach.

Additionally I maintained Facebook, drafted the yearly budget and completed numerous additional tasks.

Andy Heren Program Support Assistant

UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES with THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Agriculture & Horticulture >>

Our network of researchers, outreach specialists, and local educators are on the leading edge of creating practical solutions for livestock and crop production in addition to farm and labor management. We provide customized guidance, business planning assistance, and industry knowledge for what today's agricultural operations are facing.

Community & Economic Development >>

Businesses, governments, and organizations succeed through development from Extension educators and specialists. We provide education for elected officials to understand their roles and responsibilities in helping communities thrive. We offer businesses the direct technical assistance and connection to support structures they need to help them succeed. Our rural entrepreneurship program identifies ways for businesses to overcome challenges and take advantage of unique opportunities.

Health & Well-Being >>

We're supporting positive change for families through physical and mental health programs in addition to structural improvements needed to make the healthy choice the easy one. Our physical fitness classes and mental health training equips people with the tools they need to lead healthy, active lives. We provide public health resources and tools for community action. We provide guidance on systems changes for food security and food access.

Human Development and Relationships >>

Reinforcing family connections, financial knowledge, and strong relationships is at the heart of Extension's programming. We support learning and emotional bonding by building literacy skills in justice-involved families. We guide community and individual development across lifespans. We teach financial security through rent planning and budget management.

Positive Youth Development & 4-H >>

Community-led 4-H programs deliver quality activities and leadership opportunities that result in engaged, energized, and informed young people across the state. 4-H is a movement – in Wisconsin, 98% of our 4-H members are inspired to make positive changes in their communities.

Natural Resources & Conservation - Value Added State Funded Programs >>

We work at the crossroads of communities, natural resources, and agriculture to protect our environmental assets and guide resource management. We support individual and regional water-well testing, along with education to address safe drinking water. We educate farmers, businesses, and communities on safe practices to ensure access to plentiful, sustainably managed sources of food, water, and energy.



Supporting Dairy



The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Dairy Program strengthens the competitiveness of the Wisconsin dairy industry through statewide education and research. The program has educators and campus-based specialists focused on the following areas: welfare & herd health, emerging technologies & facilities, feed & nutrition, milk quality & milking systems, reproduction & genetics, and youngstock development.

The Landscape

7,100 dairy cows in Eau Claire County

98% Family owned farms 25,064 pounds milk per cow -WI average \$1.5 billion

Claire agriculture (2019)

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In 2023, the dairy program partnered with the Eau Claire County Land Conservation, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce, Eau Claire County Fair, the Eau Claire County Livestock Project, Augusta Library, and Wisconsin Literacy, Inc.

Community Impacts In 2023

65 literacy volunteers learned where to find dairy management resources that have been translated into Spanish for use with English Language Learners (ELL) at the Wisconsin Literacy, Inc. Fall Virtual Conference. An introduction to Extension Spanish translated resources for dairy employees was shared to increase knowledge and awareness of translated management materials. There was a panel discussion by English tutors and Extension on English Language Learner resources for dairy farm employees. The Extension component shared dairy resources that were already translated to Spanish, where to look for dairy events / webinars that may be useful to their students, and how to find other university resources. The recorded webinar session has an additional 39 views online.



Badger Dairy Insights - Webinar series

The Badger Dairy Insight webinar series started in 2020 and has continued due to its popularity. It is a collection of webinars on different dairy management topics ranging from welfare & herd health, nutrition, milk quality, genetics & reproduction, emerging technologies & facilities, and youngstock development. Over 2023, there were 484 participants in the live webinars and 2,536 recorded webinar views on YouTube, illustrating the popularity of the recorded webinar model.

Leadership Eau Claire Ag & Environment Day

Leadership Eau Claire is a skill building program hosted by the Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce. Extension partnered to teach developing community leaders about Eau Claire agriculture and its economic contributions to the county. After participating in the program, when asked to agree or disagree with the statement: I learned about how dairy farms function, 96% agreed.



Bees, Trees, & Cheese with NRCS: Conservation Discussion

Extension partnered on the Natural Resource Conservation Service event with other organizations to provide the opportunity for landowners and farmers to explore what resources are available with the various organizations in their local community. Across the three hour event, 83 participants had an opportunity to learn about cover crops being utilized as feed / grazing forages, including being able to see potted forage plants to help them better identify forages on their properties.



Lyssa Seefeldt Regional Dairy Educator

Lyssa is the regional dairy educator for Chippewa, Dunn, & Eau Claire counties. Working with farmers is always a rewarding experience and I usually learn just as much from farmers as I can share with them. Farmers are some of the most creative problem solvers that I know and helping them add to their toolkit of herd management skills is one of the best pieces of working in Extension. No two days are the same and you never know what questions are coming your way each day.



Supporting Crops and Soils



The Division of Extension UW-Madison Crops and Soils program connects regional educators and statewide specialists to focus on issues and challenges facing today's field, vegetable, fruit, and emerging crop producer. The Crops and Soils Program focuses on Forage and Grain Production and Management, Emerging Crops, Grazing, Pest Management, Soils, Nutrient Management, and Economics of Crop Production.

The Landscape

75,000 Acres of corn and soybeans planted in 2023

172,000 Acres devoted to agriculture \$28.5 Million dollars of grain produced



Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In 2023, partners included FFA Chapters, Chippewa Valley Forage Council, Western Wisconsin Agricultural Lenders, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Eau Claire County Farm Bureau, Land Conservation Department, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Mayo Clinic Health System Community Action Board.

Community Impacts In 2023

The Soil Social for farmers and agency professionals was designed to engage participants in discussion about cover crop and soil health management to learn innovative crop management practices and strategies to implement cover crops and improve soil health and farm profitability. Farmers and agency professionals participated in a Soil Social to learn innovative cover crop implementation practices to improve soil health. The social was delivered through an informal round-table sharing of ideas and practices regarding cover crop management. In addition, on-farm research was implemented to discover soil health and water infiltration impacts of winter cereal cover crops. Use of winter rye, winter wheat, and winter triticale was planted to determine impact on soil and water quality.



Cover Crops and Soil Management

Working with the Eau Claire County Land Conservation Department, field and workshop events were held to provide farmers and landowners with information on cover crops, soil health and management. On-farm research in combination with soil health workshops were provided to connect farmers with unbiased, local research to help farmers and landowners make informed decisions. Farmers learned the benefits of cover crops in their relation to soil conservation and soil quality. Cover crop fields included, rye drilled after soybeans, multi-species mix drilled after rye for grain, rye late summer aerial interseeded into corn for grain, and multi-species mix drilled after summer snap beans. Farmers were introduced to soil penetrometers while also examining root growth of cover crops.

Badger Crop Connect

The Badger Crop Connect was a webinar series held throughout the growing season to provide timely crop production and market information to farmers, agribusiness professionals, and agency personnel. The series connected UW-Madison researchers and Extension educators together to address current growing season issues. The purpose of this event was for farmers and agribusiness professionals to gain knowledge and skills that can be directly applied to their acreage in terms of pest, soil, water, and crop management utilizing cutting edge technology to increase sustainability and profitability on farms across Wisconsin.

Manure Management



Dairy and livestock farmers are faced with manure management challenges to properly apply manure at agronomically determined rates while balancing environmental concerns to protect ground and surface waters. The distance manure needs to be moved from farm to cropland for feed is increasing as dairy and livestock farms grow in animal numbers. Field events and training for farmers and agriculture professionals was provided where participants learned manure management application and manure spill response techniques to maximize nutrient efficiency, protect ground and surface water, and increase farm profitability. The goal of the program is to increase knowledge about manure application, placement, and timing while preventing manure and soil runoff.



Jerry is the regional Crops and Soils Educator for Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. I have served as an educator in Extension since 1998 and continue to enjoy the opportunities and challenges that come with serving the agricultural community. I find the variety of tasks most rewarding such as on-farm research, working collaboratively, helping individuals to improve their lives.

Jerry Clark Regional Crops & Soils Educator



Wisconsin 4-H

Supporting Our Youth



4-H is the largest youth development organization in the United States. Eau Claire County 4-H currently has 15 chartered clubs and groups. Three of these are project-specific: Shooting Sports, Horse & Pony, and Dog. There is one Leaders Association, an Older Youth Council, and eleven Community Clubs. The most popular project areas are Art, Photography, LEGO, Cloverbuds (early elementary school age), Foods & Nutrition, Cake Decorating, Ceramics, Woodworking, Youth Leadership, and Vegetables.

The Landscape

277 Enrolled Youth up 8.6% over 2022

83 First Year Members

61 authorized adult volunteers \$62,296

value of hours volunteered

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In 2023, Eau Claire 4-H partnered with the L.E. Phillips Memorial Library, Vecino a Vecino, the Eau Claire Area School District, the Eau Claire County Fair, the Eau Claire County Livestock Project, the Wisconsin Educational Opportunities Program, Eau Claire Energy Cooperative, and the Hmong Mutual Assistance Association.

Community Impacts In 2023

- 23 Young People attended State & National educational experiences with leadership, civic engagement, and career exploration focuses
- The 4-H Educator worked with Vecino a Vecino to offer 4-H Bilingue/Club Latino 4-H with up to 10 families in attendance



Wisconsin 4-H

Virtual Weaving Series

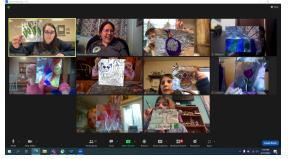
A Collaboration with UW-Madison professor, Marianne Fairbanks and STEM Outreach Educator, Tom Zinnen. This 3-session series reached 104 youth and adults across the state to support the "spark" of fiber art and STEM.

Art U

Collaboration with UW-Stout Art Education program to provide a series of virtual art lessons culminating in an art show and celebration to support the "spark" of art.

4-H Summer Camp

Research shows that camp experience has far-reaching benefits well into adulthood. We hired and trained 17 high school 4-Hers as counselors. These young leaders helped plan and carry out a 4-day, 3-night base camp experience at Kamp Kenwood for 42 campers and an outpost experience for 19 campers at Lake Wissota State Park.



"We've loved doing this - I have very much appreciated the ability for my kids to participate from home...Doing the art gallery is a nice conclusion and a great way for the artists to showcase their work! We appreciate the planning and work that goes into this behind the scenes." --Art U Parent



"I learned more at Outpost camp than I have at any other camp experience." -- Outpost camp counselor

"I would recommend Outpost camp because it is absolutely awesome." -- Outpost camper









"Outstanding Achievers" at the 4-H Awards Banquet



Archery participants in the Eau Claire County 4-H Shooting Sports program



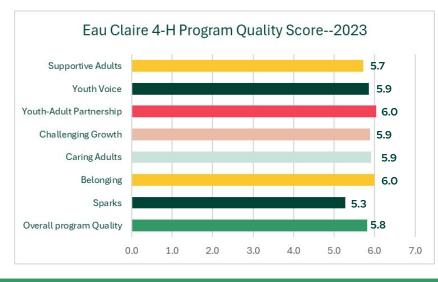
Chickens at Discover 4-H



The 4-H Thriving Model shows that youth who participate in high-quality youth development programs will thrive. The model predicts that thriving youth achieve key developmental outcomes.

To determine scores for Wisconsin 4-H Program Quality, youth members age 13 and up were invited to take an online survey asking them questions about their 4-H experience. The survey was developed by Mary Arnold, Oregon State University and Ryan Gagnon, Clemson University. **Forty-three Eau Claire youth responded to the survey sent in 2023, a 35% response rate.**

Scores are compiled for each component of the model on a scale of 1-7, 7 meaning outstanding program quality. Scores between 4.9 and 6.1 are considered "high quality."



Implications:

The data indicates that Eau Claire County 4-H Program Quality is high, with some room to grow. The lower score for Youth Sparks is not surprising – Sparks are tied to the opportunities to learn new things (projects) and develop an interest in a topic/project. This is the lowest score statewide. In 2023, we have been working on ways to offer more project-based learning for members.



Rachel Hart-Brinson Bilingual 4-H Educator I have been the 4-H Educator in Eau Claire since April, 2019. I wanted a career where I was never bored. Mission accomplished. There is always something happening and I really appreciate being able to continue learning and growing in the position. My favorite part is working with young people and watching them grow and develop into confident leaders. I also really enjoy building partnerships with community organizations and the dedicated volunteers that make 4-H possible. I look forward to reporting on our efforts to grow the program with new audiences and club types for 2024.



Supporting Lawns, Gardens & Landscapes



Horticulture is the connection between people and plants. It supports environmental stewardship, human wellness, and the growing of local food. The program focuses on strategies to mitigate environmental challenges such as pollinator decline and environmental pollution. It offers education on how to grow your own produce to help reduce food costs and aid in nutrition plus, communicates the physical, mental and social wellness benefits gardening provides and encourages people of all ages to incorporate gardening into their lifestyle even when space or mobility is limited.

The Landscape

344

Lawn, landscape and gardening questions responded to regionally **Positive** rating from end of season evaluation of regional horticulture advising service

End of season evaluation respondents who changed or adopted new practices based on guidance received

२२%

60

Regional programs, presentations, classes offered, and community events participated in

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin throughout urban and rural communities to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work. In Eau Claire County, the horticulture program partnered with several organizations to offer garden-based educational programs including the ADRC Dementia Care Program, Altoona Public Library, Augusta Memorial Public Library, the Jeffers Road Community Garden, and the Eau Claire Area Master Gardener Association.

Community Impacts In 2023

Established a new community partnership with ADRC Eau Claire to develop a monthly horticulture-based program for people living with dementia and their care partners.

Cultivated a previously untapped area of educational outreach for our region involving the mental, physical, and social benefits of gardening.



The Nature Prescription



Partnered with the ADRC Dementia Care program to deliver monthly hands-on, nature inspired experiences that help stimulate the senses, provide for social interactions, and encourage physical activity especially the use of fine motor skills while imparting a sense of purpose.

Jeffers Road Community Garden

Consists of 50 garden plots where individuals from the community and elders from the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance grow vegetables which reduces food costs and helps address food insecurity as well as build community, lessening social isolation.

Responding to lawn, landscape & garden questions

End of season evaluation reported that clients consistently praised the service provided, emphasizing its efficiency, care, and knowledge.

"It was such a pleasure speaking with Margaret Murphy. She not only answered my question but provided tips and resources that I am sure I will use in the future."







"I received helpful, friendly, & informative feedback to rescue an indoor plant that had great sentimental value to me. I learned a number of plant care strategies in the process. I'm very grateful for the service I received."

"The information you have available in articles and by responding to questions is wonderful! We bought our house with 1-1/2 acres on Beaver Creek a couple of years ago. The previous owner let most of the land grow over so there is an abundance of honeydew, black locust, climbing vines and buckthorn. I'm slowly clearing it all out and with your help replanting a lawn, so it becomes a healthy yard. Your help is invaluable in this!"



As horticulture educator, I get the perks of cooperative programming with community partners, collaborative work with Extension colleagues regional and statewide, great professional development opportunities and a sense of accomplishment and joy in teaching about the wonders of plants and gardening.

I truly appreciate your support of my program area and welcome your input or questions.

Margaret Murphy Horticulture Educator



Health & Well-Being

Supporting Healthy Communities



The Extension Institute for Health & Well-Being works to catalyze positive change in Wisconsin communities to promote health and well-being. Our research-based programs are focused on food and nutrition security, chronic disease prevention, mental health promotion, substance use prevention, and access to health care. Rooted in both urban and rural communities, we're working together to help solve the state's most pressing well-being needs and to ensure that all Wisconsinites have the opportunity to live stronger, healthier lives.

Specifically, **Extension's Behavioral Health program** promotes positive mental health by teaching skills to manage stress more effectively, practice self-care and reduce risky substance use by youth and adults. We also build community skills, tools and resources to promote health.

Margo Dieck, Behavioral Health and Well-Being Educator, joined the Eau Claire County Extension team in late November 2023.

The Mental Health Landscape

20% 17%	39% 22%	50%	4.9
20% of high school students and 17% of middle school students seriously considered suicide in the last 12 months. (2021 YRBS)	39% of middle school students and 22% of high school students most or all of the time get emotional support when they need it. (2021 YRBS)	50% of high school and middle school students report problems with anxiety within the last 12 months. (2021 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps)	Adults reported that their mental health was not good on 4.9 of the previous 30 days, which is worse when compared to the state and nation. (2021 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps)



"I'm new to Extension and the Eau Claire area, and I'm excited to be here. I look forward to learning and understanding the mental health needs and landscape within Eau Claire County and the Chippewa Valley. I'd love to connect, please don't hesitate to reach out!" margo.dieck@wisc.edu | 715-839-4717

Margo Dieck Health & Well-Being Educator



FoodWlse

Healthy Choices Healthy Lives

FoodWIse is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). With local strengths, we support healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents experiencing limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels.



Eau Claire County Landscape

Whether people are healthy or not is affected by systems, policies, and environmental factors.

8%

of county residents (8,516) experience limited income and low access to a grocery store^



9.6%

of county residents (10,219) use SNAP benefits to purchase food for themselves and their families.*

[^]County Health Rankings * WI Dept of Administration and WI Dept of Health Services

Achieving More **Together**

UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin throughout urban and rural communities to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work. In Eau Claire County, FoodWIse partners with elementary schools, Boys and Girls Club summer garden program, Head Start programs, women's transition home, and older teens to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.

Community

Impacts in 2023

Engaged with 962 learners, making 4929 educational contacts around nutrition education topics with a variety of partners, including Western Dairyland and Altoona early care centers, Affinity House, K-12 schools - Augusta, Flynn, Lakeshore, Locust Lane, & Longfellow - and Western Dairyland Fresh Start.

Expanded FoodWise lessons with the Dual Immersion Spanish classes at Longfellow Elementary. Also joined in the Longfellow Blazin' Lions family event to outreach to all families.

Supported Market Match program at the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market. Over 500 FoodShare participants attended, spending \$22,864, and receiving \$13,738 Match tokens.

FoodWIse education is funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program - EFNEP. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.



FoodWlse

FoodWIse helps Fresh Start teens learn cooking skills!

Western Dairyland Fresh Start program supports young adults ages 16-25 who experience significant challenges as they work to finish high school or earn their GED.

Fresh Start teaches independent living skills along with career planning. Participants give back to the community by building a house for a qualifying family.

FoodWIse provides nutrition lessons along with food preparation skills and self-regulation breathing techniques. Fresh Start Coordinator and participants also kindly helped rebuild structures at the Kids Garden where FoodWIse teaches Boys and Girls Club youth.

To learn more about the Western Dairyland Fresh Start program, go to their website at www.westerndairyland.org/fresh_start.phtml

Multi-level Program Efforts



Inspiring



Collaborations

FoodWIse provided lessons with elementary-age youth in schools and Boys & Girls Club. We encourage students to taste, explore, and learn about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables.

We also offer Harvest of the Month, a program focusing on seasonal fruits and vegetables. We engage students with tastes, teacher activities, classroom and cafeteria posters. We reinforce by sending caregiver handouts, which are available in English and Spanish.

The Kid's Garden is an annual favorite among youth. We collaborate with Master Gardeners who help youth experience the garden, while we provide nutrition education and a variety of tastings including their harvest. Youth have been very positive about our lessons. During the summer garden program, two youths exclaimed, "This stir-fry was bussin'!" and "I like this stir-fry better than pizza!" The beet smoothie was also a hit!



Sandy Tarter Nutrition Coordinator



Joy Weisner Nutrition Educator



Jael M. Wolf Bilingual Nutrition Educator

Ever wonder what drives FoodWlse? Here's a glimpse: With 35 years of combined experience, we're fueled by a passion for community nurturing and empowering families with evidence-based nutrition education. From kids trying new fruits to teachers praising our impact, and from 'aha' moments among parents to young adults mastering dishes like sesame chicken stir fry, we live for these rewarding experiences. But our mission extends further—we're dedicated to improving food access, supporting FoodShare families, and expanding coalition outreach. Curious? Reach out anytime! We're here to chat and answer your questions!

Community Development

Supporting Our Community



As we step into 2024, we are shifting our focus in Community Development, based on county input, to prioritize Organizational and Leadership Development, with a secondary emphasis on Local Government. We believe this strategic move will unlock numerous opportunities and foster collaboration, innovation, and resiliency in our communities.

Facilitating Community Conversations

The new educator will help Eau Claire County hold conversations about important issues, identify shared visions for their future, and engage residents.

Achieving More Together



This position will assist leaders and community members in gathering information and applying that information to make decisions that lead to stronger, healthier neighborhoods, organizations and communities.

Building stronger Relationships

Extension helps leaders and community members build strong, trust-based relationships that serve as the foundation for working together.

Coming Soon!

Interviews are under way and we hope to have a new educator by the end of May!