

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A training session for manure applicators and farmers where participants learn to apply manure safely and accurately to keep themselves safe, protect the environment, respond to manure spills and increase farm profitability.

A presentation and discussion for farmers and agronomy professionals where participants learned the impact of organic matter content on nitrogen, water, and nutrient management to increase awareness of the influence of organic matter on nutrient and water management to increase soil and crop productivity and farm profitability.

A nutrient management program for farmers where participants learned to identify nutrient application strategies and management decision points to improve farm profitability and protect ground and surface water. The goal of the program is to increase overall efficiency of nutrients applied to the landscape.

A training program for private applicators where participants learned about safe handling and the application of restricted-use pesticides to protect themselves and the environment.

A panel discussion for educators, agronomy industry and agency professionals where attendees learned about the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) to increase awareness of nitrogen management results and involvement in the program. The goal of the presentation as a panelist was to discuss experience with the program as an extension educator and fiscal agent.

Spotlight

Manure applicators handle approximately 2/3 of Wisconsin's 12-billion-gallons of dairy manure produced annually. Proper training in accurate and efficient manure applications is critical to applying manure where and when it is needed to reduce environmental risk and improve farm profitability. Manure applicator training 101 sessions were offered to commercial applicators and farmers. These sessions are part of a series of statewide applicator training. A new interactive mapping exercise was created to engage applicators and farmers in problem solving and decision making. The mapping exercise focused on manure storage siting, transportation, environmental setbacks and impact, application methods, safety, spill response, and communication. A new Manure Application Workbook was developed to correspond to the new mapping activity. The workbook and materials were created by team members Kevin Erb, Conservation Training Specialist, Jerry Clark, Becky Brathal, and Scott Reuss and delivered and taught with assistance from Anastasia Kurth. After two training sessions, ninety-three applicators completed the training. Participants received a certificate of completion at the end of the course. A post activity evaluation indicated a 1.12-point increase in the Manure Storage Site Selection and a 1.04 increase about Setbacks and Sensitive Areas on a 5-point Likert scale. A knowledge increase was indicated on Road and Transportation, Semis, Dumpster, and Hose Location, and Manure Gas and Road Safety with an overall increase of 0.81. Additional training is planned statewide in late February and throughout March.

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



Planning for an artificial insemination course for dairy and beef producers. The goal is to teach farmers how to breed their cattle, so that they are not dependent on an AI technician.

A monthly webinar series of timely topics for beef producers to inform and assist them in decision making on their own operations.

Two Beef Quality Assurance training sessions were held in Northwest Wisconsin (Eau Claire and River Falls) in early 2025. These were part of a coordinated statewide effort to provide BQA certification to producers throughout Wisconsin through the Fall and Winter of 2024-25, which will be summarized at the conclusion of all training. A total of forty-eight individuals attended the Northwestern Wisconsin training. (With: Bill Halfman)

The school for Beginning Beef Producers was a six-part virtual series for individuals new to beef production or dairy producers transitioning to beef production. Participants learned about various aspects of beef enterprises, including marketing strategies, cattle health, nutrition and reproduction, and cattle enterprises. My teaching roles included animal handling, record keeping, reproduction, and genetics. The goal of this series is to enhance the economic sustainability of emerging beef producers. (Partnered with Sandy Stuttgen, Adam Hartfiel, Beth McIlquham, Bill Halfman, Kimberly Kester)

Continued meetings with community partners: Ryan attended the Northern Wisconsin Beef Producers Association annual meeting to learn more about the organization, its membership, and needs of beef producers in the area.

Spotlight

Beef Quality Assurance is a nationally coordinated, state-implemented program that provides systematic information to U.S. beef producers and beef consumers on how common-sense husbandry techniques can be coupled with accepted scientific knowledge to raise cattle under optimum management and environmental conditions. BQA is valuable to all beef and dairy producers because it: Demonstrates commitment to food safety and quality. Safeguards the public image of the beef and dairy industries. Upholds consumer confidence in valuable beef products. Improves sale value of marketed beef cattle. Enhances herd profitability through better management.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator



Planning demonstration plots for the public on how to use several types of season extenders. The goal of this effort is to help gardeners learn about techniques to extend the growing season for longer harvest potential.

Planned a garden series for the public that includes guidance on donating garden fare to pantries, container gardening with fruit and common garden pests. The goal of this series is to provide information on garden produce safety when donating produce, expanding your container gardening experience and best sustainable practices when managing common garden pests.

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Extension Eau Claire County

February 2025 Report

Provided garden articles and factsheets for the public in the Extension in the Valley, a tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news. Included were resources on pruning deciduous trees, apple trees and deciduous shrubs together with information on floriology. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to seasonal horticulture topics.

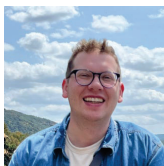
Participate in a horticulture workgroup focused on environmental stewardship. Though in its infancy, this effort's intent is to encourage communication and collaboration around common programming topics including sustainable practices and promoting biodiversity.

Spotlight

I set up several season extending equipment including cloches, a low tunnel and cold frame at a community garden to demonstrate their ease of use and how they can extend the garden season. This effort was in response to several questions from the public about such equipment. We plan to have 1-2 events at the garden to show the setup of equipment and the progress of crops. We will discuss any pros and cons to each type of season extenders.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



Facilitated a 2-day planning and design workshop to help the community of Fairchild, Wisconsin make improvements to community infrastructure (parks, trails, downtown, etc.). Members from 3 local organizations as well as citizens at large worked together to develop a shared vision for future development and enhancements to community infrastructure in Fairchild. The 2-day workshop provided a forum to collect information to inform community placemaking planning and design alternatives that the community could use to make Fairchild more vibrant.

A Strategic Planning process for the Eau Claire County Criminal Justice Collaborating Council (CJCC), where seated members completed individual interviews, and participated in a three-part workshop series to affirm the purpose, establish goals, and develop work plans to achieve them. Through this effort, the CJCC will build its organizational capacity to address pressing issues in the criminal justice system and enhance the efficacy of the system to build safer and more just communities.

Provide a leadership role in the founding and operation of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative. Extension is working closely with a cooperative board of local civic and business leaders to move forward on constructing a new hospital and related clinics. The goal of the cooperative is to create renewed healthcare access in a region adversely impacted by the recent closure of two closed hospitals and 19 clinics, to preserve nearly 1,400 high paying jobs, and to support local economic development efforts and to support the local tax base.

UW-Madison Division of Extension is facilitating a study by the Eau Claire County Government to move to a county-wide emergency medical services (EMS) program. Extension staff regularly meet with Eau Claire County leadership and have begun interviewing county EMS service and local government leaders as part of a study on how to best create and implement a county-wide EMS service that will replace struggling local EMS services. This program is intended to put the pieces in place to create a county-wide EMS service beginning January 1, 2026. The EMS service is intended to relieve

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the EMS expenditure burden off local 19 local units of government and to provide enhanced emergency services response across the county.

Strategic planning for a community-serving organization where we updated the organization's mission and vision statement, identified goals, and developed action plans. The planning process is intended to clarify the organization's purpose and develop achievable steps to realize its vision.

A two-part facilitation workshop with the Eau Claire County Economic Development Committee to clarify the scope and responsibilities of this group and identify goals so that the committee can pursue efforts that sustain the economic vitality of Eau Claire County.

Planning for a Strategic Planning workshop for Eau Claire County in collaboration with Eau Claire County Administration. The goal is to assist the County with identifying key priorities and develop coherent action plans, so that the county government can be responsive to challenges and opportunities and enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Spotlight

Eau Claire County's 19 municipalities provide EMS services through one of the six EMS services operating in the county. Rural towns are struggling with the cost of providing the service to constituents in part because of levy limits but are also struggling to maintain adequate levels of state-licensed EMS providers due to lower volunteer rates. This is causing the rural towns to struggle to meet the state's minimum EMS service standards, causing rural residents to face long wait times for EMS response. This in turn is leading to a greater risk of death. U.W.-Madison Division of Extension's Local Government Education Program, and Eau Claire County Extension, are working closely with County Administrator Kathryn Schauf and her senior staff to create a framework for a county-based EMS service beginning in January 2026. Extension staff have extensive EMS experience, including laws and regulations, and are contributing unique expertise to the county's efforts. Extension staff is also facilitating the community conversations needed to successfully implement such a countywide EMS service. This project began in July of 2024 and is ongoing. If successful, the rural towns within Eau Claire County will be relieved of the expense of funding EMS service for their constituents while receiving a higher level of service from a county-based EMS service. Moreover, this is likely to create a model that can be duplicated by other counties across the state.

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter

FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner

FoodWise Educator



A 6-week nutrition education series for 3rd graders and 5th graders at Longfellow Elementary school. The goal of this effort is for students to learn about MyPlate: the five food groups, eating healthy foods in each food group, reading nutrition facts labels, finding total sugars and how to incorporate physical activity into daily life.

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Extension Eau Claire County

February 2025 Report

A 6-week nutrition education series for 3rd graders (three classrooms) at Locust Lane Elementary school. The goal of this effort is for students to learn about MyPlate: the five food groups, eating healthy foods in each food group, reading nutrition facts labels, food safety in the home and how to incorporate physical activity into daily life.

A series of virtual strength training sessions (StrongBodies) for adults in the community, where participants engage in regular, progressive strength training and health education to improve their physical and mental health and enhance social connectedness. As of now, there are 17 Eau Claire County residents registered for our Tuesday/Thursday virtual StrongBodies series.

Spotlight

FoodWise partners with schools that meet eligibility of having over 50% Free/Reduced Lunch participation rate. In Eau Claire County, the elementary schools we are currently teaching in include Augusta, Flynn, Lakeshore, Locust Lane, and Longfellow. FoodWise educators use approved curricula that align with the Wisconsin Model Academic Standards for Nutrition. Our educators provide a series of 5-6 lessons that feature hands-on, active learning with an introduction to fruit and vegetable tastings. Consideration is given to accommodations for individuals along with written information offered in Spanish to caregivers. We provide evaluation surveys and welcome feedback from students, teachers, and parents. FoodWise supports policy, system, and environmental changes within the school such as the WI Harvest of the Month, Great Apple Crunch, DPI WI Upgrade School Meal Appeal, and DPI WI Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program.

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



A 6-week program, WeCOPE, for adults where participants learn 11 self-care and coping skills. The goal of this effort is to improve skills to manage stress, improve coping, increase positive emotions, and improve mental health.

Developing the Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) educational program in collaboration with Health and Well-Being Institute colleagues. The goal of this effort is to develop a program plan, logic model, evaluation methods, etc. so that other Extension educators can offer similar programming to their target audience(s).

A series of meetings for WeCOPE facilitators where the curriculum is being reviewed and revised. This effort is being conducted to ensure quality learning experience for participants in this program and to support consistent facilitator delivery of the content.

Two Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) presentations for Eau Claire County Child Support Agency staff where staff learned about ProQOL, the aggregated ProQOL scores for each team within the agency, participated in an activity to gather feedback on potential interventions for the agency, and identified individual action steps they can take to positively influence their professional quality of life. The goal of this effort is to provide staff with baseline knowledge of ProQOL, understanding their personal and organizational level of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction, ask questions, brainstorm solutions, and personally engage with strategies to improve professional quality of life where they work.

A facilitated conversation for Eau Claire County Child Support Agency leadership staff where participants intentionally reviewed staff feedback around professional quality of life in the areas of secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and compassion fatigue. Through this activity, leadership team members provided invaluable context around staff feedback, discussions around the process of data collection, and action steps they vision to be successful within their teams.

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Spotlight - WeCOPE Participant Testimonial



I started my six-week WeCope journey with Margo and Luisa on January 16, 2025. Just before the course began, I bought an Oura ring as the first step in creating a toolkit to manage the stress I was facing in my daily life. Working in data and analytics, I found the constant tracking of my stress levels both fascinating and concerning. My readings indicated higher-than-normal stress, especially since I was also coping with my Dad's Stage 4 diagnosis while supporting him and my mom through treatment.

Through weekly classes and assignments, I was able to see how my moments of stress steadily decreased while my restorative moments increased, as evidenced by the data from my Oura ring. Additionally, I noticed my blood pressure dropping to normal levels, my sleep latency decreasing, and my total sleep duration increasing. My mindset shifted towards positivity and gratitude, and the tension in my body eased as if a giant knot had been released.

I eagerly anticipated each live class, where our group fostered a supportive community, making everyone feel comfortable sharing and celebrating one another. The dynamic of the group reflected Margo and Luisa's collaborative talents in presenting the WeCope program in relatable ways that encouraged conversation and self-reflection.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to participate in WeCope and would highly recommend it to others. This experience has deepened my mindful connection between my body and emotions, allowing me to appreciate positive moments and acknowledge my personal strengths. This program truly enhanced my toolkit, and I couldn't be more thankful!

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Preparation for an adult and volunteer-led project exploration day for 4-H members in grades K-5 in April. This event will allow our young 4-H members to explore new project areas and our older youth and adults to practice delivering a high-quality experience.

The Eau Claire County Older Youth Council (OYC) organized the 22nd annual Sarah Nelson pancake breakfast in memory of a former member. Funds raised support Joshua's Camp for kids battling cancer, the Sarah Nelson Scholarship, and OYC service projects. The youth will use some of the service project money to make blankets at their April meeting for people to use while receiving chemotherapy treatments.



Planning for a project learning day for youth in grades 6 and up in collaboration with Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire County 4-H Programs. The goal is to provide participants with opportunities to master their interests and skills through two sessions, so that they can grow and develop in their chosen areas.

Setup crew Eau Claire County Older Youth for Sarah Nelson Memorial pancake breakfast

Extension Eau Claire County

February 2025 Report

The six week Art U sessions have begun. For one hour each Monday evening youth in grades k-6 meet online while youth in grades 7-12 meet in person on the UW-Stout Campus. The sessions are presented in collaboration with the UW-Stout Art Education Department. We have a total of 55 youth participating in this event.

Planning for the 2025 Camp Counselor Retreat that will serve as a bonding and learning opportunity for this year's camp counselor team.

STEM Day at UW-Stout's "Fab Lab" where young people in grade 6-8 experienced hands-on learning by using laser cutting, laser engraving, and soldering equipment to build a "useless machine." This experience provided programming for those with a spark in STEM.

Planning for a project learning day, Clover University, for youth in grades 6th-13th in collaboration with volunteers and Area 6 4-H staff. The goal is to provide hands-on learning experiences in various project areas, where participants will gain new skills and knowledge. Through this event, youth will develop practical abilities, foster a love for project learning, and build confidence in their capabilities, contributing to their overall personal growth and future success.

The Eau Claire County AmeriCorps members provided a 6-week session with 2-3 graders at the Altoona Boys & Girls Club to provide them with an opportunity to experience what 4-H can offer and provide them with high-quality youth development experience.

A Camp Counselor planning retreat where we explored the roles and responsibilities of camp counselors, practiced leadership skills used in the camp counselor role, planned camp, and built the summer camp counselor team to prepare our counselors for executing a meaningful camp experience.

Preparing for registration opening March 1 for the ECASD summer programming partnership clubs. The Fiber Arts and Baking club offers an opportunity for young people not currently enrolled in the 4-H program to experience high quality youth development programming.

Spotlight

The Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire County 4-H Programs recognized a need for youth in grades 6 and up to have more opportunities to explore and develop their interests and skills in a structured, supportive environment. This prompted the creation of Clover University, a project learning day designed to address this need. By offering two focused sessions, the program aims to provide participants with hands-on experiences and practical knowledge in their areas of interest. The goal is to foster personal growth, skill development, and a sense of achievement among the youth, ultimately contributing to their overall development and preparing them for future challenges.



Camp Counselors playing the game "Bat and Moth"

Area Extension Director

Kristen Bruder | Eau Claire, Chippewa, and Dunn Counties



The role of the AED is like that of the department head in the county. If you have ideas, thoughts, or want to chat about Extension please reach out! Below is a brief overview of the role of AEDs: Extension fully invests in Area Extension Directors (AEDs) who oversee an area. These administrative positions are responsible for partnership management, staff development, financial management and program coordination.

Through the many interactions the AED has with county partners and local educators, the AED develops a solid understanding of the local needs and county priorities and helps to align Extension educational programs to ensure the programs address county needs. Educators also communicate local needs to their programmatic Institutes, which collectively identify opportunities to address statewide needs.

For a full list of upcoming events throughout Extension, click [here](#)

Value Added Programming

A 17-week online program teaching entrepreneurship and personal development skills to formerly incarcerated adults so they can "defy the odds" by overcoming barriers in the workplace due their criminal histories, start their own businesses, and potentially employ others with criminal records. (Diana Hammer, Michael Senn)

An educational opportunity for programming alumni to return as peer facilitators and support new participants through a 17-week entrepreneurship class to help more people finish the class successfully and deepen their learning. (Diana Hammer, Erin Rivera, Michael Senn)

A coaching program for families and individuals, where participants learn how to create financial goals and gain money management skills. The goal of this program is to enable participants to prepare for and take charge of household financial situations that occur due to changes in income or unforeseen hardships. (Jeanne Walsh)

Facilitation of regular (every other month) meetings of the Red Cedar River Water Quality Partnership, where partners meet to discuss ways to implement a ten-year comprehensive watershed management plan, plan events, assess activities, update each other on work being done, and formulate new ways to collaborate. (Daniel Zerr, Becky Brathal, Kelsey Hyland)

Facilitation of regular monthly meetings of the Eau Claire River Watershed Coalition, where partners meet to discuss ways to implement a ten-year comprehensive watershed management plan, plan events, assess activities, update each other on work being done, and formulate new ways to collaborate. (Daniel Zerr)

A 6-week series for 63 Kindergarten students at Parkview Elementary focusing on the foundational principles of healthy habits, the 5 food groups of MyPlate, and the essential practice of hand washing. These hands-on lessons include interactive games, activities, and sampling healthy foods which helps youth build a positive relationship with nutritious choices from an early age, setting the stage for healthy habits that will last a lifetime. (Sandy Tarter, Hillarie Roth)

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