

Extension Eau Claire County

March 2025 Report

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A series of four Focus on Forage webinars for forage growers, livestock producers, agency staff and agricultural consultants where research-based forage management solutions are shared to optimize forage yield and quality to improve overall farm profitability.

Provide garden articles published in the Extension in the Valley, a Tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news. In the March issue, participants learned about growing kitchen herbs, soil health and ideas for spring flowers to plant. Links to UW Madison Extension fact sheets and upcoming events were also provided. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture matters. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

By participating in the Eau Claire Farm Show, farmers were made aware of current extension research and educational programs and information. The annual show provides a forum to teach and inform farmers and agriculture industry professionals about current extension resources and research results. North Country Enterprises estimates an annual attendance of 7,000-10,000 annually. (Ryan Sterry, Jerry Clark, Margaret Murphy, Teal Polzin)

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

Planning for a four session Focus on Forage webinar series for forage growers and agriculture consultants in collaboration with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the US Dairy Forage Research Center. The goal is to provide research-based forage management solutions to improve forage quality and meet producer goals.

A risk, crop insurance and grain marketing hybrid course, where material was adapted into a more relevant format for use in-person, webinars and an on-line course. The Farm Pulse –Crop Insurance and Grain Marketing has assisted farmers and agricultural professionals in identifying strengths and weaknesses of their crop business to assist them in making decisions that will improve their farm profitability.

Spotlight

Forage production is an important segment of crop production in Wisconsin and helps to support the livestock and dairy industries in the state. Meeting forage quality and forage yield goals of producers is a key metric to profitability on these operations. The Focus on Forage planning team brainstormed timely forage topic ideas and generated a four-session series – Focus on Alfalfa Companions, Focus on Corn Silage, Focus on Forage Cover Crops and Focus on Alfalfa Toolbox. The educators then identified Extension specialists, Educators, and researchers that could discuss the impact of these management recommendations to forage growers. Each webinar was one hour long, featuring three to four speakers and allowed time for participants to ask questions related to their operations. The four-webinar series averaged 111 participants per session, which is an increase from the 2024 series. We are currently collecting post event survey data.

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Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



An educational article for beef producers and agri-business professionals, where the audience will learn about setting goals, records to keep, and analyzing production records.

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. The goal of this series is to enhance the economic sustainability of emerging beef producers.

Ryan attended meetings with seven entities (4 public and 3 agri-businesses) to introduce himself to the area and learn more about livestock producers' needs in the Chippewa Valley.

Planning for a calving management course for dairy and beef farm owners and workers. The goal is to teach farm owners and workers to recognize signs of stress during calving and to know when assistance is needed and how to assist with the delivery of the calf, so that more live calves can be born.

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

Spotlight

Division of Extension beef educators were asked by the WI Cattlemen's Association to provide articles for their quarterly newsletter, Cattle Trials. The goal of these articles is to increase their members' awareness of current beef research and best management practices. Livestock Program beef educators take turns and collaboratively schedule and peer-review our articles for accurate, unbiased scientific content, grammar, and audience appeal. Topics are selected in response to emerging situations, new research, or seasonal production practices. Our articles supplement or highlight our Program Plan of Work programming goals. Ryan recently co-authored article can be found at: [Ryan's Article: https://www.wisconsincattlemen.com/resources/cattle-trails-newsletter](https://www.wisconsincattlemen.com/resources/cattle-trails-newsletter)

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

Sign up to receive [Extension in the Valley](#) and for more garden articles, visit [Seasonal Gardening Articles](#).



An activity to illustrate the benefits of gardening for people living with dementia and their care partners. Participants built their own sensory garden in a pot. This effort was designed to encourage people to include gardening in their lifestyle and experience the many benefits that gardening provides including using fine motor skills, getting a sense of accomplishment, stress relief, positive socialization, and a way to stimulate the senses plus having a connection to nature.

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upcoming events were also provided. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture matters.

Attended the Red Cedar Watershed Conference and gained information on how clean water can start in your own yard.

A program for the public on growing fresh produce to share with food recipient organizations where participants learned best practices when donating produce and tips on preferred vegetable selections to grow. This effort was designed to encourage people to share their extra produce to help offset food insecurity in our communities.

Spotlight

A program for the public on growing fresh produce to share with food recipient organizations came about because of a request for programming from a local library. The local Extension Horticulture educator has been partnering with this local library to provide a series of gardening talks every spring for the past three years. Plus, gardeners, particularly at the local community garden, often give their extra produce away to community members so they wanted to touch base with local gardeners about best practices based on work done and being done through Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Created a PowerPoint presentation to support a talk discussing best practices and personal experience of managing and creating donation gardens while working as a horticulture educator with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. Provided handouts for participants to take with them and share out plus, answered participant questions.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



A 4-part workshop series in partnership with Wisconsin Literacy where board members and directors of small literacy organizations evaluate the current state of their organization, analyze support pools for volunteers and funding, and create action plans to ensure their organization is sustainable over time.

Continued development of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative and its efforts to re-open the former St. Joseph's Hospital in Chippewa Falls as an full-service interim healthcare facility, and to build a new full-service hospital in Lake Hallie, Wisconsin to replace the 34% of regional health care lost with the closure of the two HSHS hospitals in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls and 19 Prevea clinics across the region.

Planning for a series of mini-publics and workshops for community members, service providers, and individuals experiencing homelessness in collaboration with the Eau Claire Department of Human Services and Eau Claire City/County Public Health Department. The goal is to collaboratively develop concrete, actionable strategies for supporting individuals experiencing homelessness, so that we can ensure all community members have safe housing, strengthen our collective sense of belonging, and realize Eau Claire's potential as a truly welcoming and inclusive community.

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

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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.

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.

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.

An educational opportunity for program 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.

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

Spotlight

Wisconsin Literacy reached out to Extension to see if they could assist them with building the capacity of small literacy organizations that are primarily volunteer led. These organizations, which are members of Wisconsin Literacy, expressed concerns about challenges with recruiting and engaging volunteers. In many cases, current volunteers serving on the board and as organization directors have been in their roles for some years and are looking to have new volunteers' step into these leadership roles to ensure their organizations continue to be able to deliver services. A team of Extension's Organizational and Leadership Development Program colleagues met with Wisconsin Literacy staff to better understand the needs of the literacy organizations. They then developed a 4-part virtual workshop series for literacy organizations that are primarily volunteer-led or have a small number of paid staff. The workshop series introduced participants to tools (SWOT analysis, scenario planning, empathy mapping, fund and volunteer development circles, asset mapping, and action planning) they can use to evaluate the current state of their organization, analyze support pools for volunteers and funding, and develop an action plan to ensure their organization is sustainable over time. Participants learned how to use each tool and practiced using the tools with their organization's unique situation.

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Participants also shared their challenges and successes, gave peer feedback, and supported one another in their learning. Outcomes will be added to this report once the workshop is completed, and evaluations are collected.

Health & Well-Being



Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator

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). (Margo Dieck)

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. (Sheila Michels, Danette Hopke, Janeth Orozco, Jennifer Park-Mroch, Margo Dieck, Sara Ennocenti)

Spotlight

The WeCOPE curriculum was written in 2021 and has been implemented widely across the state. A current evaluation of the program impact is underway and the WeCOPE facilitator team has identified necessary changes to incorporate adult learning principles, participant feedback, and educator requests. A team of educators and state specialists are gathering input from instructors and revising the curriculum. The product of this effort will result in a curriculum that supports consistent delivery by educators across the state, be more comprehensive in the tools and modifications necessary for unique audiences and will align with adult learning principles.

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator



A 6-week nutrition education series for 1st graders in Augusta Elementary school. The goal of this effort is for students to learn about eating healthily, being active, exploring fruits and vegetables, and the importance of handwashing.

A 6-week nutrition education series for 5th graders at Augusta Elementary school where students 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. This effort engages students with interactive, fun activities and gives them a hands-on experience to taste a variety of healthy foods from each food group related to the lessons.

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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. FoodWise provided leadership and a nutrition chat on protein needs for older adults.

Spotlight

FoodWise has collaborated with Eau Claire Area School District and Augusta School District food service managers to take part in the WI DPI School Meal Appeal program. This effort has supported Longfellow, Locust Lane, and Augusta Elementary schools in completing a self-assessment of their food service and each one has selected strategies to enhance their meal service. Schools will receive \$1000 reimbursement towards implementing those strategies. The goal is to increase student satisfaction and participation in their breakfast and lunch programs. FoodWise will continue to support these strategies within their upcoming direct education. Additionally, students in First, Third and Fifth grades who participated in our nutrition education were surveyed to evaluate their knowledge around MyPlate.



Photos from Augusta Elementary cafeteria

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Working with two 4-H volunteers to plan a Project Exploration Day for grades K-5. This experience will allow older youth session-leading experience and younger youth an opportunity to explore activities from 6 project areas.

The Tri-County Performing Arts Festival held on March 1 provided an opportunity for young people to practice performing solos, duets, or in groups in Music, Dance, or Drama categories. Preparing your piece or play, performing in front of an audience, and receiving feedback from a judge builds life skills as well as a sense of belonging within clubs and the wider 4-H program.

A Food Project Meeting held on March 2 involved volunteers leading sessions for youth in grades K-8. Sessions included topics of choosing a centerpiece, reading a recipe, planning a menu, proper hand washing, and entering in the food's

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revue. This program was intended to provide education for those with a spark of cooking and increase the number of people who register for the food revue.

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.

Spotlight

The six-week Art U sessions wrapped up on March 10 with an in-person art show and final group project at UW-Stout campus. The sessions are presented in collaboration with the UW-Stout Art Education Department with online sessions for grades K-6 and in-person sessions for grades 7 and up. A total of 55 youth participated in this event from across Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire Counties. Parents and kids shared how exciting it was to be on campus and participate in the art show.



Art Education Student, Lily Schwartz, looks on as an Art U participant looks at the art show.

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 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)

An online learning opportunity for Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) and volunteer business leaders to collaborate on developing stronger business plans. This structured interaction builds confidence and entrepreneurial skill in the EITs and fosters empathy and confidence for volunteers that formerly incarcerated entrepreneurs can contribute positively and move our communities forward after prison. (Diana Hammer, Erin Rivera, Michael Senn)

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A watershed conference for people living and working in the Red Cedar River watershed, where attendees learned about efforts to reduce phosphorus pollution (and thus harmful algal blooms) in the river and its impounded lakes and learn what they could do to contribute to this effort. (Daniel Zerr)

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 Introduction to Qualitative Data Analysis Workshop for Local and Tribal Health Departments, where they learn about the purpose, basics, methods and tools and tips to conduct qualitative data analysis to support health needs assessments. This increases community capacity in qualitative data analysis and program evaluation, and community capacity to incorporate community inputs in decision-making in public health. (Pearly Wong, Sarah Boulton, Selena Freimark, Sheena Cook-Fuglsang)

A one-day workshop for community broadband leaders, economic development organizations, public and private permitting agencies, and internet service providers, where participants learned about broadband permitting requirements, engagement and endorsement of Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) projects, and engaged in peer learning through case studies so they can build effective public-private partnerships that meet their community's broadband needs, increasing economic opportunity and quality of life for all community members. (John Parrish, Brittany Beyer, Christopher Stark, Gail Huycke, Jessica Beckendorf, Kristen Bruder)