

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A series of alfalfa measurements that will help to better understand optimum alfalfa and winter cereal harvest across Wisconsin. The results of this study will help forage growers to determine what techniques can best predict optimum forage harvest timing to improve first cutting forage quality for livestock. (Liz Gartman, Aerica Bjurstrom, Anastasia Kurth, Angie Ulness, Jackie Mccarville, Jerry Clark, Jordyn Sattler, Kevin Jarek, Scott Reuss, Ryan Sterry)

Spotlight

First crop alfalfa cutting tends to represent the largest quantity of forage yield for the year, representing approximately 36–41% of total dry matter (DM) yield. When harvested in a timely manner, it can result in high levels of neutral detergent fiber (NDF) digestibility while still meeting yield goals. Mismanaging first crop forage harvest timing creates challenges for the farm. Too early harvest leads to lower yield and extremely high-quality forage which some farms may struggle to properly utilize in their ration. Later than optimum harvest yields distinctly lower forage quality and may jeopardize a farm's plan for future harvest events. There is a diverse network of forage-focused staff at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension that has led the effort to track, report, and record alfalfa quality using Predictive Equations for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) and correlate with lab analyzed scissors cut results. Some regional educators have the financial support of local forage councils (including Manitowoc, Fond du Lac, Chippewa Valley, Outagamie, and Shawano), agribusinesses and other grower groups to fund lab testing, others lack this financial support, hampering the uniform collection of laboratories tested forage sample data. Requested grant funding would allow educators across the state to standardize the collection of PEAQ stick measurements, crop stage, and height, as well as the collection of samples for submission to certified forage testing labs. The effort would include both alfalfa and winter annual cereal crops, with most data collection occurring within alfalfa. A uniform statewide effort results in greater understanding and correlates relationships between PEAQ measurements and relative forage quality (RFQ) from lab reports in various growing regions across Wisconsin allowing for the development of future predictive tools to improve grower forecasting and decision-making capability.



Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



A series of introductory videos introducing regional livestock educators to provide examples of livestock area programs to county partners and public stakeholders. (Ryan Sterry, Beth McIlquham)

To identify host sites for field day programs and demonstrations, Ryan has continued to meet with livestock producers, public agencies, and agribusinesses in the Chippewa Valley. (Ryan Sterry)

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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Prepared and continue to manage three local community gardens for the public where participants can grow vegetables and fruits to save money, participate in learning opportunities and be part of a garden community to enhance positive socialization. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Andy Heren, Kristi Peterson)

Staffed a UW Madison Extension booth at a free annual event hosted by a local museum. This year's theme was plants and insects. Information on native plants and pollinators was provided for participants to learn the value of creating ecological niches using native plants allowing urban areas to support a host of different insect pollinators. This effort is to encourage individuals to adopt gardening practices that support pollinator habitat and health throughout the year.

A garden program for beginners for participants of Affinity House where participants added warm season crops to the garden and learned about strategies for small space gardening. The goal of this effort is to teach those new to vegetable gardening about plant selection, interplanting and other techniques for gardening in a small space and garden maintenance. (Margaret Murphy, Sandy Tarter)

A garden program for youth partnership with the Dunn County Department of Human Services where participants mapped their garden, planted vegetable crops, learned about plant selection, small space gardening techniques and garden maintenance.

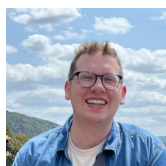
A program on adaptive gardening for participants of two StrongBodies classes where participants learn about strategies and techniques that help us to continue to garden safely as we age. (Margaret Murphy, Sandy Tarter, Karie Johnson, Mary Hoeft-Leithold)

Spotlight

Participants from the StrongBodies classes commented that they liked the idea of adding a chair to your gardening area for rests, etc.; learned about proper body positions and equipment for gardening; will take more careful consideration of my back and body when gardening and received a lot of good information especially about the tools and posture!

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



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 three-part workshop series convened leaders from over 30 homeless service providers in Eau Claire County to build and refine a community plan to end homelessness through participatory methods and the inclusion of people with lived and living experience. This collaborative effort, in partnership with

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Extension Eau Claire County

May 2025 Report

Eau Claire County Department of Human Services and Eau Claire City-County Health Department, aims to establish a unified and effective strategy for addressing homelessness across the county.

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. (Bill Oemichen, Garret Zastoupil, Karl Green, Kristen Bruder)

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. (Garret Zastoupil, Amber Wichowsky)

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. (Todd Johnson, Garret Zastoupil, Krist Runge, Melissa Kono, Todd Barman)

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

Community-serving organizations, including nonprofits, local governments, and coalitions, are more effective when they have a clear purpose/mission, vision, and goals. When there are changes in leadership, resources, community needs, and other internal or external factors that affect the organization, it is best practice to engage in some form of strategic planning to set priorities, focus energy and resources, and ensure everyone is working towards common goals. Extension met with organization leaders to diagnose the needs of the organization. When strategic planning was identified as a need, Extension worked with the organization leaders to design and facilitate a systematic process that was unique to the organization, and which helped the organization create, affirm, or revise its mission, vision, and goals. Extension also helped the organization facilitate the development of action plans intended to move the organization forward in addressing its goals. The strategic planning process facilitated by Extension generated several important outcomes for the organization. First, the process provided clarity and direction as outlined in the strategic plan report. Second, it taught organization leaders about the importance of planning as a tool for increased organizational capacity. Third, the strategic planning process-built trust, understanding, and shared knowledge that will lead to collective action to address local needs. The Community and Leadership Development Educator is preparing a Scenario Planning Exercise to be completed with the board and partners of Literacy Chippewa Valley in May 2025. Given changes in the funding environment, updating a strategic plan using a scenario planning method is an appropriate technique to support the organization. The Educator is collaborating with the Executive Director to finalize the scenario planning session.

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter

FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner

FoodWise Educator



A program on adaptive gardening for participants of two StrongBodies classes where participants learn about strategies and techniques that help us to continue to garden safely as we age. (Margaret Murphy, Karie Johnson, Mary Hoeft-Leithold, Sandy Tarter)

A 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd graders (three classrooms) at Lakeshore Elementary. 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 three-week series for Life Without Limits, a community-based transition option in the Eau Claire Area School District. The goal of this effort is for young adults (age 18 and up) to engage in hands-on and interactive learning activities involving cooking and nutrition curriculum, Food Smarts from Leah's Pantry. These adults will learn the importance of healthy eating, basic cooking skills and how to manage resources for food.

Continuation of a 5-week nutrition education series for 3rd graders (two classrooms) at Augusta Elementary. 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.

Spotlight

Studies on teaching young children about fruits and vegetables consistently demonstrate that repeated exposure, positive experiences, and engaging activities, like gardening and cooking, are key to fostering healthy eating habits. Early introduction to a variety of fruits and vegetables, combined with education and positive reinforcement, can significantly impact children's preferences and consumption of these foods.

FoodWise education incorporates the following key findings and messages (Part 2):

Curriculum-based approaches:

Integrating nutrition education into the curriculum can help children learn about the benefits of fruits and vegetables and their importance for health. Studies have shown that various interventions, including curriculum-based education, taste exposure, and garden-based programs, can lead to significant increases in children's consumption of fruits and vegetables. Teachers consistently share feedback that children look forward to our series of nutrition education in the classroom and they are more willing to try new foods following our lessons.

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Extension Eau Claire County

May 2025 Report

"Students tried new things that they didn't know they liked". "The students asked their parents to buy some of the items they got to sample." "JOY is the master of her craft. The kids love her, and they respect and listen to what she teaches them!" ~ Flynn and Augusta Elementary School Teachers

Storytelling and character-based interventions:

FoodWise educators use characters like "Potter the Otter" or "Toasty" to make learning about healthy eating more engaging and memorable.

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).

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)

Co-Chairing the Chippewa Valley Suicide Prevention Workgroup, which covers suicide prevention efforts in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. The goal of this group is to collaborate on efforts to reduce deaths by suicide in the region.

Co-Chairing the Eau Claire Health Alliance: Mental Health & Community Connectedness health priority area. The goal of this effort is to guide the work of two task forces, which are collaborative groups with specific and focused health improvement plans connected to objectives identified in the Community Health Improvement Plan. Current task force work is focused on youth mental health and safe and sober spaces in the community.

Facilitating a Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) conversation for Eau Claire County Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Outpatient Clinic staff participated in a guided discussion over efforts to improve professional quality of life in their workplace. The goal of this effort is to provide staff with an opportunity to talk about strategy changes that have been implemented and how successful they have been.

Spotlight

Deaths by suicide continue to rise in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. This workgroup brings together organizations from all three counties working to address suicide prevention. Current efforts are focused on populations at greater risk and known risk factors. I stepped into the co-chair role due to a recent vacancy. With mental health and community connectedness being a top need in Eau Claire County, Extension looks forward to collaborating with the group in this role, ensuring our collective efforts are directed towards PSE, equity, and evidence-based/informed practices. The intended outcome of the efforts of this group are reduced deaths by suicide in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. Current work is focused on means restriction for firearm access and the creation/adaptation of a grief support guide to support the community after a sudden death.

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Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Check out the [Clover Leaves](#) Newsletter

Preparing for both Outpost and Base Camp experiences at Kamp Kenwood and Lake Wissota State Park. Camp is both a leadership and learning opportunity for older youth and an opportunity for younger youth to make new friends, experience challenging growth, and explore their sparks. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)



Spanish-speaking families discussed communication and cultural issues that parents and children experience under the guidance of local mental health professionals. This was to fulfill a request by families to improve communication between parents and children.

A hybrid in-person and virtual meetings for families that talked about 4-H projects, registering for the fair, and record books. This program helps new families feel like they belong and is aimed at increasing 4-H membership retention.

A virtual training for club leaders, parents, and club treasurers that covered basic best practices, financial policies, and strategies for supporting youth leadership in the club treasurer role. This training will increase the ease of filling out the annual financial report and support young people to better succeed in the leadership role.

Spotlight

4-H Camp is a highlight for many 4-H youth. Camp is a growth opportunity for participants where they can try new things, perhaps sleep away from home for the first time, and make new friends. The 4-H Camp program is also about building leadership experiences for the older youth in 4-H. Our camp counselor program requires young people to submit a job application, including a resume and a letter of recommendation and go through an interview process. We held an overnight retreat in February that helped build team relationships and began the camp planning process. In May, we held a one-day camp counselor training where youth counselors practiced leading sessions and giving feedback to fellow counselors to prepare them to support a quality camp experience. One counselor said, "This was a really helpful training because it helped everyone know what they were doing, especially the new counselors." After this training, all the counselors present said that on a scale of 1 (not prepared) to 5 (prepared), they rated themselves either at a 4 or a 5. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)



Extension Eau Claire County

May 2025 Report

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

An on-farm research study to better understand manure application, commercial nitrogen application rates, and nitrogen credits on corn yield and potential effect on groundwater. Results from this study will help farmers, agriculture industry professionals, and agency professionals in adjusting manure and commercial nitrogen applications to optimize corn yield and protect groundwater resources. (Jerry Clark, Amber Gilles, Christine Clark, Jordan Kampa, Joshua Kamps, Kelsey Hyland, Kristin Peterson, Lindsey Rushford, Liz Gartman, Melissa Ohlrich, Ryan Sterry, Scott Reuss, Steven Hall, Teal Polzin)

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)

Navigator enrollment assistance provided to anyone in Wisconsin, where 97,013 consumers were assisted with health insurance questions or enrollment. Through this effort, our Navigators completed 4,041 qualified health plan enrollments through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace and assisted 5,615 consumers with Medicaid, resulting in widespread access to health care and improved health outcomes. (Adam Vanspankeren, Allison Espeseth, Elizabeth Rothe)

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 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)

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