

Extension Eau Claire County

August 2025 Report

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A field event for farmers where participants learned management strategies to limit nitrogen application rates to increase farm profitability and protect groundwater resources. (Jerry Clark, Lindsey Rushford, Steven Hall)

An on-farm research study to better understand manure application, commercial nitrogen application rates, and nitrogen credits on corn yield and potential effect on ground water. 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, Christine Clark, Joshua Kamps, Lindsey Rushford, Liz Gartman, Scott Reuss)

An on-farm study to better understand the effect of nitrogen application rates on nitrogen cycling and corn yield. Results from this study will help corn growers in that they can implement and adapt nitrogen management practices to optimize economic return, improve efficiency of nitrogen fertilizer resulting in more sustainable corn production and farm profitability.

A nitrogen management and water quality field day was held as part of the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program to inform farmers of nitrogen management strategies. The field day also highlighted how groundwater moves and how field surface management leads to impact on groundwater. (Lindsey Rushford, Jerry Clark, Dr. Steven Hall)



Spotlight

Groundwater quality is a major concern in Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire counties. Use of nitrogen in agriculture production fields is often needed for higher crop yields. Application of additional nitrogen and above-average rainfall can increase the risk of nitrogen moving to groundwater.

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



Ryan attended the Northern Wisconsin State Fair, Dunn County, and Eau Claire County Fairs, along with attending two pasture walks, a nitrogen optimization project field day, as well as a local cooperative field day, in an effort to introduce himself to the area and learn more about livestock producer needs in the Chippewa Valley.

Provide livestock-related articles published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news. In the current issue, participants learned about corn silage pricing, pre-conditioning calves, and upcoming programs. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current agriculture and horticulture topics. (Ryan Sterry, Jerry Clark, Margaret Murphy)

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Planning a September 2025 in-person, full day, lambing school for Northwestern Wisconsin. The goal is to help producers prepare ahead of winter lambing. This workshop will cover essential topics, including biosecurity, animal health, parasite management, and nutrition, to ensure your flock thrives. Focused on sheep, but goat producers are also welcome to participate. Learn about the necessary lambing supplies, the phases of lambing, and effective lamb processing techniques. Thanks to generous support from the American Sheep Industry Association, hands-on activities include a realistic lambing simulator. (Ryan Sterry, Carolyn Ihde)

Planning a September 2025 in-person late afternoon meeting hosted on a commercial beef operation and taught by livestock, and crop and soil educators. The goal is to increase cow-calf producers' understanding of heifer reproduction and fall forage management to improve their farm's economic viability. (Sandy Stuttgen, Bill Halfman, Jerry Clark, Melissa Ohlrich, Ryan Sterry, Sandy Stuttgen)

Planning a hybrid workshop series for dairy and beef producers, and dairy workers (in Spanish) in September 2025. The goal is to provide information and techniques to boost cattle caretakers' (including Hispanic dairy workers) confidence in preparing the cow for calving, obstetric techniques, and newborn calf care so that their health and reproductive programs maintain their farm's economic viability. (Sandy Stuttgen, Heather Schlessner, Matt Lippert, Ryan Sterry, Sandy Stuttgen)

Spotlight

The Livestock Program Plan of Work objectives include leading multi-county cow-calf production in-person meetings. Beef programming evaluation data and producer surveys indicate that cow-calf producers value in-person sessions where scientifically peer-reviewed topics are taught that will help increase their bottom line.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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



An activity for families where participants engage in a field walk on a nature trail to explore signs of animal usage of the habitat and to learn how a natural ecosystem supports and interconnects a community of fauna. This effort focuses on looking for animal tracks and is designed to increase awareness about the importance of natural areas and to increase family activities exploring nature.

A program on accessible and adaptive gardening for the public where participants discover how gardening can be a lifelong source of wellness, connection and joy. This effort is designed to show participants how to keep gardening part of one's life and continue to gain the physical, nutritional, mental and social benefits it offers. (Michelle Bachand, Deanna Wiersgalla)

Provide garden articles published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news, where participants learn about various topics. This month includes harvesting garden produce, soil testing and soldier beetles. Links to UW Madison Extension fact sheets, garden articles and upcoming events are also provided. This effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics and concerns. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

Planning, coordinating and presenting the optional Lab component of the fall 2025 Foundations in Horticulture online course for course participants where they can dig deeper into important horticulture concepts and apply what they learn

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through interactive activities. This effort is designed to increase both knowledge and confidence in addressing topics of pruning, soil testing, IPM and plant identification. (Margaret Murphy, Amy Freidig, Andy Heren, Julie Hill)

Spotlight

I saw an increase in interest from the public in discussing strategies on how to keep gardening safely and efficiently as we age. Research supports numerous benefits we receive from gardening physically, nutritionally, emotionally and mentally, all of which can help us remain more vital as we age. Offering a presentation on the benefits of gardening provides an emphasis on strategies to keep gardening accessible as we age or for anyone who may experience challenges in mobility or other areas. Provide several ergonomic/adaptive tools for participants to explore and review. Encouraged discussion on how we might rethink our gardening and gardening practices to make them easier on our bodies and fit our needs as they change. I view this program as dynamic that will continue, hopefully, to evolve.

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 study to better understand the motivations, aspirations, and practices of strategic planning within Wisconsin's county governments. Results from this study will help Extension in improving how it supports strategic planning efforts across the state. (Garret Zastoupil, Amber Wichowsky, Elizabeth

Mccrank, Sarah Schlosser)

Planning for a three-part workshop series titled "Building Powerful Networks of Support" for librarian directors, staff, volunteers, and leaders in collaboration with IFLS Library System. The goal is to build the strategic capacity of these individuals to lead their organizations, so that they can strengthen volunteer, financial, and community support for libraries across the IFLS region.

Planning for the launch of the "Chippewa Valley Nonprofit Exchange," a collaborative effort to consolidate nonprofit resources and professional development opportunities. The Exchange aims to strengthen nonprofit capacity by developing and sharing resources.

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 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 a 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)

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Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator

Hillarie Roth
FoodWise Educator



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. Sandy led classes in August and presented them on whole grains and using leftovers/food safety.

A garden program for participants of a community based residential facility where participants created a mixed garden design of vegetables and flowers in a small plot. Classes focus on continued maintenance of the garden and strategies for managing pests/problems that may arise. The goal of this effort is to teach the basics of vegetable gardening as well as to encourage people to include plants and gardening in their lifestyle even when space is limited to experience the many benefits that gardening provides. (Margaret Murphy, Sandy Tarter)

A collaboration with Eau Claire Master Gardener Volunteers, Eau Claire City Parks and Recreation, Chippewa Valley Builders Association, and Chippewa Valley Technical College to start activities in implementing the FoodWise Grant program- Year 2. This effort will replace 9 raised beds and widen pathways for accessibility in the North River Fronts Kids Garden.

A 6-week nutrition and garden series with Eau Claire Boys & Girls Club of the Greater Chippewa Valley at the North River Fronts Kids Garden in collaboration with the Master Gardener Volunteers, and in partnership with the City of Eau Claire Parks and Forestry Division. This effort integrates nutrition education with gardening and expects to increase exposure to locally grown fruits and vegetables by tending a garden, helping youth learn parts of the plants, engaging in interactive activities, and providing tastes of a variety of fruits and vegetables. Boys and Girls Club youth picked a total of 70 pounds of garden vegetables during the series.



August testimonials: "I've never seen purple corn before!" "The stir-fry is SO GOOD! I want the recipe!" "I wish my school had a garden" July testimonials: "I've never had a kohlrabi before, it's really good" "the leafy part of the broccoli is my favorite part in the stir-fry!"

Spotlight

The North River Fronts Kids Garden has been in existence for 19 years. FoodWise collaborates with the Eau Claire Master Gardener Volunteers to provide garden and nutrition education to the Boys and Girls Club youth each summer. Overall wear and tear along with weather impact has deteriorated the raised beds. FoodWise submitted a garden grant application with details of partners, work to be done, budgeting, and plan to include the community. A grant of \$2500 was secured for work to be started in 2024 when 6 garden beds were replaced and garden supplies purchased for the garden. FW secured another grant of \$2500 in 2025. This grant helped to purchase fencing, posts, trellises, straw,

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mulch, garden gloves, and lumber. Boys and Girls Club teens helped the Master Gardener Volunteers remove soil and prepped the old garden beds to be torn down. Eau Claire City Parks and Recreation helped to remove the old bed debris. Chippewa Valley Technical College Residential Construction students will be building replacement beds in their school lab and install beds on September 11th. Chippewa Valley Builders Association volunteers (Ashley Construction) will provide oversight and help with installation. Information on media release is forthcoming. Replacing the old, worn-down garden beds ensures that this Kids Garden will continue for many more years. This effort was made possible by the collaboration of many partners including FoodWise, Master Gardener Volunteers, Chippewa Valley Builders Association volunteers, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Boys and Girls Club- Mary Markquart Center, and Eau Claire City Parks and Recreation.

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



A crisis training workshop on Emotional Intelligence for crisis workers for the Recovery and Wellness Consortium where participants learned about Emotional Intelligence (EQ), completed an EQ assessment, and learned about ways to improve their individual and workplace EQ. The goal of this effort was to provide participants with education, a baseline assessment score, an opportunity to create goals/action steps for their individual needs, create a collective goal for their unit, and build consistent efforts across the entire consortium to improve staff mental wellbeing.


A mindfulness training course for residents of Eau Claire Sober Living where participants learn and practice strategies to improve self-care and coping when faced with stress. The goal of this effort is for participants to improve their emotional control when faced with stress, have healthy coping strategies to use when stressed, increase positive emotions, and improve their mental health.

A SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results) Analysis for leadership and management professionals for the Recovery and Wellness Consortium, where participants were guided through an idea-generating process and activities. Through this focused effort, hundreds of ideas were generated to guide the next strategic plan for this nine-county consortium. (Margo Dieck, Deanna Wiersgalla)

Collaborating with Safe & Sober Spaces to survey adults in the community looking for community and connection in sober-friendly environments. To increase responses from all age groups and in rural areas of Eau Claire County, this effort recently included intentional outreach to these groups of people and extending the survey deadline to include their responses.


Collaborating with the Youth Mental Health Task Force to survey adults who care for or work with youth. The goal of the survey is to understand what topics adults want more information on for talking to young people, what their preferred learning method is, and who their trusted sources are. This effort also includes a distribution plan to community members and local partners. [Take the survey here.](#)

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)



Did you know? 38% of middle schoolers and 46% of high schoolers in Eau Claire County report they rarely or never get the emotional support they need. (2022 WI Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

Take our survey!
Help us better understand how adults in the community can support youth mental health.



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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.

August testimonials: I loved this process in comparison to the SWOT process that I have facilitated many times. It feels so much more hopeful. You both did a great job facilitating, you had a great pace and were able to respond to statements to bring clarity to the topic.

Spotlight

The Recovery and Wellness Consortium Administrator reached out looking for professional development for their staff centered around emotional intelligence (EQ) and positive co-worker relationships. Recent changes to staff turnover and restructuring have shown a need for this training. This office also experiences high variability in their schedules, with sudden changes to their schedules with crisis calls needing immediate response. Fostering and improving the mental health of service professionals is integral for healthy workplace dynamics and interactions with their clients. The Administrator was a part of this training I have provided in the past when they were employed with a different organization and wanted to bring the opportunity to their current colleagues.

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



A work night where youth treasurers and club or group leaders reviewed the Annual Financial Report requirements, completed their reports, and audited other club's paperwork. This event was to support clubs and groups in accurately completing their required paperwork in a timely manner.

A facilitation session for the Country Cousins 4-H Club where the 4-H Positive Youth Development intern and 4-H Positive Youth Development Educator led connection activities and walked the club through a Strengths & Opportunities exercise to determine the direction of the club's future. Through this exercise, members were able to decide that they wanted to remain a club and create a plan for improved youth engagement and leadership.

Outreach event at Hmong Youth Day. This was to offer an engaging activity to young people and promote the 4-H program to attendees. We engaged with about 75 people.

Outreach activity at the National Night Out event in Eau Claire. The event was to engage with young people with fun activities and promote the 4-H program to families. We engaged with about 150 people.



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Preparation for conducting a county-wide needs assessment for our 4-H program. The goal of this activity is to assess the wants and desires of the county clubs so we can increase community-building opportunities and offer county-wide programming that meets member needs.



A partnership program with the Altoona Public Library as part of their teen programming. The two-day program taught basic sewing machine use, and we made a hot/cold seed pack with a gift tag to promote generosity while also increasing confidence using a sewing machine.

A two-day Lego program where young people in grades 3-5 practiced Lego-building skills and explored impacts of building design on community. The program was offered in Augusta and Altoona to provide experiential learning opportunities for those with a spark in Legos.

Spotlight

We Care Eau Claire started 6 years ago as a loose coalition of churches helping to provide back-to-school supplies to families. In 2024, they started expanding the event to include community organizations and resources that could help support families. They invited 4-H to join them. Rachel staffed the table last year and found it one of the most receptive audiences that she had experienced at a tabling event. This year, Rachel invited other office colleagues to join in tabling at the event. The Eau Claire County 4-H Positive Youth Development intern created an interactive activity. The Health and Well-being Educator, Margo Dieck provided pamphlets on WeCope and the Mental Health survey and helped support the event. The event draws an impressive number of families. 2000 backpacks were reported to be distributed. We talked with at least 300 people, gave out 4-H materials and HWB half sheets, and engaged the young people in a group mural project or bookmark decorating.



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](#)

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Value Added Programming

An updated suite of nutrient management publications is being prepared to enable cranberry farmers to reference the most up-to-date information regarding nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, and micronutrient needs and efficiency for cranberry production. The current publication suite is from 2000 and does not address modern hybrids in sufficient depth. (Allison Jonjak, Amaya Atucha)

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)

Planning for a Juntos Career Pathways Programs for Youth and Families in collaboration with local school districts and technical colleges. The goal is to provide families with career pathway information and build community between families so that they are better able to prepare for their student's future career goals. (Adam Trunzo)