

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



A field event for 5th grade students where participants learned about conservation issues and careers to increase student awareness about the importance of conservation. (Jerry Clark, Jeanne Walsh, Jordan Blue, Margaret Murphy)

An on-farm study to better understand industrial hemp fiber and grain performance related to varieties, effect of planting date, tillage treatments, and nitrogen application rates. Results from this study will help hemp growers select better performing varieties and optimize economic return to nitrogen to increase sustainable hemp production and farm profitability.

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)

A field event for 5th grade students where participants learned about pollinators, native plants and invasive species. The goal of this effort was to increase awareness of the importance of pollinator conservation, native plants and the removal of invasive species. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Jordan Blue)

Spotlight

Industrial hemp is a relatively new crop in Wisconsin since the 2018 Farm Bill made it legal to once again to grow in Wisconsin. Research and information are needed to update variety selection information and agronomic recommendations such as planting date and nitrogen application rates. Three industrial hemp on-farm field research plots were implemented. One study investigated fifteen fiber varieties and fourteen grain or dual-purpose varieties to measure fiber and grain yield and quality. The planting date study investigated four planting dates on two grain and fiber varieties to measure influence on fiber and grain yield. Planting dates were mid-May, early-June, mid-June, and early July. A nitrogen rate study was also implemented to observe the impact of rates on two grain and fiber varieties. The nitrogen rate application study investigated nitrogen application rates at 0, 50, 100, 150 pounds per acre. These research projects were funded by a NIFA SAC grant in partnership with Michigan State University, University of Illinois, and Purdue University. Data is currently being analyzed, and a full report will be available in January or February. Plans include using the data in presentations, workshops, development of factsheets, and topic hub articles.

Extension Eau Claire County

October 2025 Report

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



An in-person learning event for sheep producers, where participants learned about good management practices leading up to lambing, learned the differences between normal and abnormal lamb birth positions, and how to intervene if necessary. (Ryan Sterry, Carolyn Ihde)

A webinar, one session part of Badger Dairy Insight, for dairy farmers and dairy industry professionals, where participants learned about proper semen handling and tools, they need in their AI toolbox so they can have better pregnancy rates. (Heather Schlessner, Angie Ulness, Jackie Mccarville, Ryan Sterry)

A hybrid workshop series for dairy and beef producers, and dairy workers (in Spanish). The goal was to provide information and techniques to boost cattle caretakers' 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. (Heather Schlessner, Sandy Stuttgen, Matt Lippert, Ryan Sterry)

Spotlight

Conversations with local sheep producers identified a need for education directed at beginning producers and those curious about starting a flock. One of the most labor-intensive times with the sheep flock is lambing. Because of the time-sensitive nature of the lambing process, new shepherds must learn to diagnose problems at birth quickly, learn when and how to intervene, and know when to call for help. To address this need, a day-long in-person workshop was developed and delivered. Classroom teaching topics included biosecurity, nutrition, and health. Breakout sessions covered the phases of lambing, lamb processing, recordkeeping and technology, and practice with a lambing simulator. A pre-post evaluation was conducted the day of the workshop using a Likert scale (1=low and 5=high). All topics had an increase in knowledge of 1 point or greater, with most topics increasing by 1.5 to 1.9 points.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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



Provide garden articles to the public 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 yard and garden tasks for October. Links to UW Madison Extension fact sheets, garden articles and upcoming events are also provided. This ongoing effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics and concerns. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

A class with students on fall clean-up of their garden that included taking a soil test and discussing preparations for next spring. This effort was designed to connect and encourage youth to participate in gardening and enjoy the benefits gardening offers and experience the feeling of accomplishment.

A class on gardening with kids at the 2025 UW Stout Family and Consumer Sciences Education and WI DPI Childcare Conference where participants learned how gardening can enrich a child's life in many ways. We discussed strategies on how to create a garden space just for kids and about available research-based youth garden curriculum. This effort was designed to encourage gardening with youth with strategies to engage kids in gardening activities.

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Extension Eau Claire County

October 2025 Report

A walk through the wildflower trail at Lake Wissota State Park for the public where participants learned about native plants and how they positively impact the local ecosystem and support native wildlife. This effort was to provide information on native plants while actively engaging in a productive, healthy and scenic native plant system to encourage attendees to consider incorporating native plants into their own landscape.

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 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)

A fall cleanup workday for two community gardens for the participants of the gardens. Participants received assistance with fall cleanup and were welcomed to ask questions about best practices. This effort was designed to assist garden participants with their fall cleanup and aid them with any questions they may have about garden cleanup.

A class on fall garden cleanup with a small group of youths interested in vegetable gardening that are engaged in Dunn County Human Services programs. Participants learned and discussed tasks and strategies for eco-friendly garden clean up. This effort was designed to teach participants about the importance of good fall cleanup to reduce disease or other issues in the garden next year and to provide, where possible, potential overwintering sites for pollinators.

A class on bringing outdoor plants indoors for the winter for the public. Participants learned best practices for bringing plants indoors and helping them thrive through the winter. This effort was designed to help participants be as successful as possible in overwintering prized plants that can be placed back in the landscape next spring.

A field trip class on tree identification for home school families with elementary-aged children where participants learned the basics of identifying both deciduous trees and conifers together with general facts about the trees we saw on our walk. This effort was designed to inspire kids to learn about and appreciate trees and have an opportunity to walk through the woods to practice their tree identifying skills.

A class on fall yard and garden cleanup for the Lake Wissota Garden Club where participants learned and discussed tasks and strategies for balanced, eco-friendly fall yard and garden care that supports birds and pollinators.

An activity for people living with dementia and their care partners. Surrounded by the beauty of an apple orchard, attendees participated in an art activity and created their own unique piece of glass fusing allowing them to tap into their imagination and creativity while using fine motor skills. The experience also provided a sense of accomplishment, positive socialization, and a way to stimulate the senses.

A presentation for the public on native plants and pollinators where participants learned the value of creating native niches in their landscape to support a host of different insect pollinators. This effort was to encourage individuals to adopt gardening practices that increase pollinator habitat and support pollinator health throughout the year.

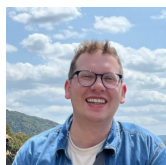
Spotlight

The class was developed in response to a request from a group of parents who home school in Chippewa County. They are interested in receiving more nature-based programming. The class included handouts to help with identifying trees and an informal walk and talk through the woods at a city park to view and discuss trees.

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Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator



Developing interactive maps and planning an educational program to help community organizations identify and connect with others by addressing similar system-level issues. The initiative aims to strengthen collaboration and increase organizational capacity to respond to local needs and drive meaningful changes. (Tim Borud, Garret Zastoupil, Michael Brenneis, Sarah Schlosser)

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 McCrack, 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.

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)

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)

Spotlight

Community Development Educators Garret Zastoupil and Tim Borud heard growing concerns from community members about the challenges of working in isolation. People expressed frustration over not knowing who else was involved in similar efforts, struggling to collaborate across groups, and feeling uncertain about their ability to work together effectively on shared community issues. A multi-county mapping and social capital project was designed with the goals of 1. Identification: Identify and map organizations working on specific system-level issues. 2. Connection:

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Extension Eau Claire County

October 2025 Report

Develop and deliver a social network mapping curriculum. 3. Relationships: Adapt and deliver Courageous Connections curriculum to help organizations develop strategic relationships. *Note: Courageous Connections is a curriculum that was previously developed and has been well-received. It teaches skills for building relationships that lead to collaborative action.*

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator

Hillarie Roth
FoodWise Educator



Planning for transition of kitchen supplies and resources for low-income adults in collaboration with UW-Stout, UW-Eau Claire, and local partners including Western Dairyland-Fresh Start and Affinity House as the FoodWise program ends. The goal is to share equipment and curriculum to create sustainability with some limited nutrition education services for adults needing support with independent living skills including healthy eating and food preparation.

Nutrition Educator Hillarie Roth had her last day on October 1st. We thank Hillarie for her dedication and services to low-income families in Area 6 and wish her well in future endeavors.

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



A conference presentation session on Professional Quality of Life (ProQOL) for participants of the 2025 Wisconsin Child Support Enforcement Association fall conference in Appleton, where participants learned core concepts and strategies for individuals and organizations to improve professional quality of life. The goal is to empower child support leaders to take action steps to reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress and increase compassion satisfaction in the workplace.

Collaborating with the Safe and Sober Spaces Task Force to plan for policy, systems, and environmental change around increasing the frequency and availability of substance free events/spaces/groups/establishments in Eau Claire County. Current work is focused on connecting with local businesses interested in sober events, creating policy guidelines around sober events, and identifying methods to advertise sober events.

Collaborating with the Youth Mental Health Task Force to plan for an equitable approach to increasing the amount of youth accessing mental health services in Eau Claire County. Current work is focused on connecting adults who support youth with resources, generating age-appropriate talking points around mental health topics, and updating existing materials.

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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 recent Surgeon General report declared an epidemic of loneliness and social isolation, noting the negative health consequences of people not engaging with others in their community. Supporting strategies that increase opportunities for building relationships and community connections can improve mental health. Similarly, in recent years, surveys of youth at the national, state, and local level show increasing mental health needs among youth. Many factors impact youth mental health, such as in-person and online bullying and lacking trusted adults in their lives. Helping youth build healthy relationships and coping mechanisms can lead to a lifetime of improved mental health. (2025-2027 Eau Claire County Community Health Improvement Plan) This group oversees two task forces, focused on efforts related to the goal and objectives listed below. Goal 3: Improve mental health by providing opportunities for community connection. Objective 3.1 Support at least three strategies to increase community access to options for safe and sober spaces for socialization outside of work, school, and home, focusing on areas/communities with the largest gaps in access. Objective 4.1 At least quarterly each year promote training, programs, and resources that equip families with knowledge, skills, and resources to support youth mental health focusing on youth most at risk.

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Planning for year 6 of the virtual Cultural Baking series that explores flavor and ingredients from cultures around the world, exposes participants to a variety of baking techniques, and explores food science facts. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Andrea Rippley, April Daniels, Zachary Rozmiarek)

A day trip to Camp Nawakwa where both Delong and South Middle School Juntos families experienced the fall woods, made crafts, played games, fished, hiked, roasted s'mores, and danced. This program was to strengthen relationships and build belonging in the Juntos program.

Planning for 2026 Summer Camp has begun with the development of Camp Counselor application materials. As a team, we created an application and guidelines for any high school youth interested in being a counselor. We advertised the positions on Facebook, in newsletters, and by email. Finally, we have created deadlines for applications and a list of next steps to use after the applications have closed. (Zachary Rozmiarek, Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann)

Monitoring new enrollments in 4-H and sending e-mails connecting new member families and club leaders. This is an effort to make sure new members know where to go for meetings and do not miss club information since 4-H Online does not automatically communicate with club leaders when new families enroll in their clubs.

An artist in residency collaboration amongst multiple entities both inside and outside of Extension, with the goal to create a distance learning program to be offered statewide to all 4-H members within a targeted range to increase participation in the woodworking/whittling project. (Emery Bork, Jay Johnson, Rachel Hart-Brinson)

A "Fall Flavors" virtual baking series for those in grades 3 and up. This program baking apple muffins, apple crisp, and pumpkin pie aims to build skills, explore a "spark" area, and build belonging within the Eau Claire County 4-H program.

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Planning for multi-county youth development programming for 4-H members and community youth in collaboration with Area Six 4-H educators. The goal is to deliver engaging events in speaking, STEM, robotics, performing arts, and leadership throughout the year, so that youth across Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties have expanded access to skill-building opportunities and collaborative learning experiences. (Jordan Blue, Rachel Hart-Brinson, Zachary Rozmiarek)

Spotlight

The Eau Claire County Health Department coordinates a youth and healthy communities advocacy program called SAFE. There are "SAFE" groups in 14 schools throughout middle and high schools in Eau Claire County. Allison Harder and Kate Torkelson attended a conference in Madison where an Extension colleague, Taylor Seale, shared about the Youth Advocates for Community Health Handbook which includes a planning guide called, "5 Steps of Action." Taylor connected Allison and Kate to the Eau Claire Extension PYD and HWB Educators to see if we could present on the 5 Steps of Action in support of their SAFE planning day.

Rachel Hart-Brinson and Jordan Blue, the PYD Educator in Chippewa County, created a 45-minute presentation on the "5 Steps of Action" as outlined in the handbook. We kicked off the planning day event on October 23. Our goals were to provide a solid foundation for them to start creating their "Activism" action plans and to help them think outside of the box of community health issues being either mental health or substance use.

We presented 137 Youth and 16 adult advisors. All participants said that they were better able to think about their Activism plan after the presentation. Over 3/4 of them said that they had thought about a health or community issue in a new way because of the presentation. The Eau Claire County Public Health Department manager expressed her satisfaction with our presentation in getting to think about health issues in a new way.

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

A data analysis effort for partners at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, where Natural Resources Educators and Specialists reviewed responses from multiple stakeholders listening sessions to identify common themes across audiences. Through this data analysis, partners gained insights that will guide discussions at an upcoming roundtable event and inform the development of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, helping ensure the strategy reflects stakeholder perspectives and priorities. (Anna James, Daniel Zerr, Jen Mcnelly, Ken Genskow)

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, in partnership with Wisconsin Farmers Union and member farms, a farm tour for Hmong-speaking farmers to explore small-scale farm operations (ideally 5 acres or less) that differ from typical Hmong farming practices. The tour will highlight season extension techniques, post-harvest handling, infrastructure, wholesale market preparation, and sustainable practices (e.g., cover cropping). The goal is to increase awareness, knowledge, and interest in diverse small-farm models. (Addison Vang)

Over the past year, Covering Wisconsin has coordinated and overseen 12 regional- and population-focused coalitions in which Wisconsin professionals interested or directly involved in health insurance enrollment gather to discuss changes to health coverage policy, share outreach and educational strategies, receive free professional training, and offer ideas for relevant consumer resource messaging and design. Through our efforts, a total of 88 coalition meetings were held, attracting 1,649 attendees, to focus on the health coverage issues affecting Wisconsin residents, especially immigrants, Spanish-speaking residents, Hmong residents, and those located in Central, East Central, Milwaukee, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest, and Western regions. (Caroline Gomez-Tom, Allison Espeseth)

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)

Arts Camp is a program designed to give older youth an opportunity to build their leadership, teaching and collaboration skills, as well as an experience for youth in grades 6-8 to explore their sparks in the Expressive Arts, through an overnight camp designed around best practices of Positive Youth Development. Arts Camp was held at Upham Woods on the first weekend of October. This year's 8th grade attendees could be counselors next year. (Jay Johnson, Alicia Schroeder-Haag, Jen Maggio-Laack, Jordan Blue, Laura Pine)

4-H State Dog Shows: Annelise and Naomi Preston of the Beef River Pacesetters 4-H Club in Eau Claire County participated in the State 4-H Showmanship and Obedience Show hosted by Langlade County in September. The team of Percy and Annelise placed 2nd in both obedience and showmanship in some tough classes. Livvy, shown by Naomi, placed 4th in showmanship in a very large class. In October Annelise participated in the 4-H State Agility Show in Oshkosh, where Livvy did very well. She won her class in standard agility, received 2nd in tunnels, and had the fastest time of 38 dogs on JTT (jumps, table, tunnel), earning Annelise the high point handler award. Congratulations girls!

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