

Agriculture

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Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator
Celebrating 28 years with Extension February 22!



Provide garden articles to the public published in the Extension in the Valley, tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on Horticulture and Agriculture news, where participants learn about various topics. This month includes information on Easter lilies and growing greens in the spring garden. This ongoing effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics and concerns and includes links to many other articles as well as upcoming events. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

A training session for manure applicators and farmers where participants learn to apply manure safely and accurately to keep themselves safe, protect the environment, and increase farm profitability. (Jerry Clark, Anastasia Kurth, Jordyn Sattler, Kevin Erb)

A training program for private applicators where participants learned about safe handling and application of restricted-use pesticides to protect themselves and the environment. (Jerry Clark, Amber Gilles, Deanna Wiersgalla, Jordan Kampa, Kristi Peterson, Laura Flandermeyer)

Planning for a Healthy Water Summit for farmers, decision makers, elected officials, and industry and agency professionals in collaboration with county public health and land conservation departments. The goal is to increase water quality awareness by providing local information that enables community members to make informed decisions. (Jerry Clark, Amber Gilles, Kristi Peterson, Garret Zastoupil, Jeanne Walsh, Margaret Murphy, Ryan Sterry, Todd Prill)

Spotlight

2/3 of Wisconsin's 12-billion-gallons of dairy manure annually. Proper training in accurate and efficient manure applications is critical to applying manure where and when it is needed to reduce environmental risk and improve farm profitability. Manure applicator training 101 sessions were offered to commercial applicators and farmers. These sessions are part of a series of statewide applicator training. Interactive mapping activities were created to engage applicators and farmers in problem solving and decision making. Scale replica model tractors, tankers, semis, toolbars, dumpsters, and hoses were provided to help participants visualize problems and solutions. The mapping exercise focused on manure storage siting, transportation, environmental setbacks and impact, application methods, safety, spill response, and manure sampling. An updated Manure Application Workbook was developed to correspond with the mapping activity. The workbook and materials were created by team members Kevin Erb, Landon Baumgartner, Chris Clark, Jerry Clark, Anastasia Kurth, Dan Marzu, Melissa Ohlrich, Todd Prill, and Jordyn Sattler. One hundred-seven applicators and farmers attended three training sessions. Additional training courses across Wisconsin are planned in February and March. An evaluation summary of all statewide locations is currently being developed.

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator

A workshop for beef producers to meet their need to obtain their Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certification that maintains their economic viability. BQA certification maintains market access that contributes to the economic viability of beef producers. Harvest facilities will purchase cattle from beef producers with proof of BQA certification. The need

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for this programming is indicated by data collected from national beef quality audits of processors and conducted every five years. (Ryan Sterry, Sandy Stuttgen)

The Northcentral Cattlemen's Winter Conference was an in-person seminar for beef producers, where participants learned about breeding bulls, pregnancy diagnostics, biosecurity, marketing, and industry updates. Ryan was an invited speaker on *Building Tomorrow's Herd: Picking Heifers That Perform*. (Ryan Sterry, Sandy Stuttgen)

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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



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A workshop on winter sowing for the Chippewa County Courthouse employees in partnership with the Chippewa County Staff Satisfaction Squad where participants learned how to sow seeds in protective vented containers such as milk jugs that are placed outdoors to allow for a naturally timed, germination of climate-tolerant seedlings. This effort was designed for gardeners to get a jump start on seed starting. The process is easy, inexpensive, and uses recycled materials.

A radio interview for the public where we touched on springtime gardening topics. Listeners learned about various topics such as starting seeds indoors, planning your garden and the importance of soil testing. This effort was designed to help listeners learn both about Extension Horticulture services and connect them with seasonal information.

Spotlight

I enjoyed participating in a live, noontime radio program with whEM. The program explores a variety of topics, and we are looking to incorporate more gardening segments to help connect listeners with timely, seasonal information and keep them informed about what's happening through Extension.

Community Development

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator

Planning for a regional satellite site for the Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies (CommNS) semi-annual conference for community leaders and nonprofit professionals in collaboration with Clear Vision Eau Claire. The goal is to provide local access to statewide plenary sessions paired with interactive regional workshops, so that Chippewa Valley

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organizations can build their capacity for positive community change without the barriers of travel. (Garret Zastoupil, Elizabeth McCrack, Sarah Schlosser)

Planning for a Business Model Canvas workshop for women in agriculture in collaboration with regional crops and livestock educators and the statewide Farm Pulse project. The goal is to provide entrepreneurs with a creative, iterative framework to strategize business growth and connect them with cross-institute Extension resources, so that they can strengthen their farm businesses and build a foundation for formal business planning in a fluctuating market. (Garret Zastoupil, Teal Polzin)

Planning for a Comprehensive Housing Strategy Design Series for County, City, and State Stakeholders in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, the City-County Health Department, and WEDC. The goal is to synthesize the data from the 2023 Housing Study and the specific interventions in the forthcoming Homelessness Plan, so that we can create a unified county-wide housing roadmap that prevents bottlenecks by ensuring adequate supply at every rung of the housing ladder—from transitional housing to workforce ownership.

A "Strengths-Based Culture" Workshop Series for Family Services Division Staff (CPS, CLTS, Youth Justice) in collaboration with Division Leadership. The goal is to facilitate a three-part engagement series where staff identify their top strengths (using High 5 & Gallup tools) and learn to apply them to team dynamics, so that the division models the same strengths-based perspective internally that they are mandated to use with families, creating a congruent culture that reduces cynicism and improves practice.

Spotlight

Professional development opportunities for the nonprofit and civic sector are often concentrated in Madison, creating geographical and financial barriers for organizations in West Central Wisconsin. The Center for Community and Nonprofit Studies (CommNS) identified a need to decentralize their semi-annual conference to better serve the entire state. Locally, organizations in the Chippewa Valley—which are navigating complex social and economic shifts—require accessible platforms to collaborate, share resources, and learn from statewide experts while addressing the specific needs of their local communities. In response to this outreach from CommNS, I am collaborating with Clear Vision Eau Claire to host and facilitate a day-long satellite workshop in April 2026. This effort builds upon our established partnership with Clear Vision as a key driver of civic engagement. Our response involves a "hybrid-local" design: we will live-stream the morning plenary and keynote sessions from the Madison conference to provide high-level insights, followed by locally facilitated interactive workshops in Eau Claire. This structure allows us to bridge the gap between statewide research and local application, making the content relevant to the specific landscape of West Central Wisconsin.

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator



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Participation with WI Nutrition Incentive Network to bring state funding for nutrition incentives to area farmers markets offering a Market Match/Double Bucks program. This effort will help families with FoodShare to access fresh fruits and vegetables. Working with Eau Claire Downtown and Menomonie Farmers Markets to enhance their current Market Match programs and increase capacity.

Working with Health and Well-Being Educators to explore collaborative nutrition and wellness programming that meets the needs of our Chippewa Valley agency partners.

Partnered with Positive Youth Development (PYD)/4-H Educator and Intern to establish strategic connections with the Eau Claire Area School District and Eau Claire County school districts for future programming.

A series of 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.

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



A panel discussion for Cooperative Extension educators and agents across the U.S. who participate in a community of practice, where UW-Madison Division of Extension educators served as panelists to share their experiences and insights offering mental health programming in communities. The purpose of this panel discussion was to share ideas and practical tips for expanding mental health programming within cooperative extension to reach audiences across the country. (Sheila Michels, Cath Tease, Jennifer Park-Mroch, Margo Dieck)

Development of a Farmer Mental Health Resource Guide where mental health resources for farmers are centralized in one handout. The goal of this effort is to support farmer's mental health and connect farmers with resources and professional help. (Margo Dieck, Ryan Sterry)

Planning for a 'sober game' in partnership with the Eau Claire Express baseball team. The goal is to increase access to sober spaces for community members who do not feel comfortable being around alcohol and provide education for parents/caregivers on modeling healthy habits around alcohol.

Planning to bring free mental health training opportunities to Eau Claire County through a partnership with Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin. The goal is to provide Mental Health First Aid and Question, Persuade, Refer training to community members and organizations to increase the number of individuals who can support someone in distress and connect them to appropriate professional care.

A program where participants learned about the types of stress, ways stress influences their mental health, and coping strategies for managing stress. Participants learned to identify triggers of stress and practiced coping strategies they could utilize in those moments.

Planning for a 'sober event landing page' for community members seeking alcohol-free spaces in partnership with Volume One. The goal of this effort is to cultivate a permanent online space for community members to find alcohol-free restaurants and events and learn from community members who are alcohol-free and how they navigate the Chippewa Valley through long-form stories and articles.

Serving on the Steering Committee for the Eau Claire Health Alliance (ECHA) to support agenda planning for ECHA Coalition meetings; provide oversight, leadership, support, and voting on ECHA Coalition issues; and support of overall ECHA Coalition and Task Force organization, structure, and membership. This effort ensures ECHA efforts are aligned and advancing towards meeting overall coalition objectives.

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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.

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. The goal is to 'Improve mental health by providing opportunities for community connection.', and the specific objective is '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. Current work is focused on creating an outreach plan, planning for an alcohol-free game with the Eau Claire Express, and collaborating with Volume One for an alcohol-free landing page on their website.

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. The goal is to 'Support youth mental health', and the specific objective is '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. Currently work is focused on handouts to guide adults talking with young people about mental health, planning for a resource fair, and planning for a community event.

Spotlight

To strengthen the local behavioral health safety net, Extension and the Eau Claire City-County Health Department are collaborating with the Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin. The initiative focuses on removing financial barriers to life-saving education by providing free mental health crisis intervention training. This strategic outreach ensures that community members are not only aware of mental health challenges but are actively trained to support those in crisis and navigate the professional healthcare system.

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



A Camp Counselor Retreat for the 2026 4-H camp counselors where they helped choose the camp theme and goals, participated in team-building activities & learning sessions, and enjoyed a "mini" camp experience. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)

Juntos-Delong Middle School 4-H Club where young people and their families find belonging, explore career choices, make educational goals, and learn about educational pathways and community resources. In February, they made frosting and practiced decorating cupcakes.

Planning for a project exploration day where youth in grade K-5 can explore their sparks through hands-on learning sessions.

Planning for a Volunteer Retreat where participants will experience high-quality training with tools that they can take back to their clubs and build belonging in the 4-H program.

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Planning for Youth for the Quality Care of Animals event in partnership with the Eau Claire County Livestock group that is part of the Eau Claire County Fair.

Conducting the hiring process for a summer intern to support the 4-H summer programming and provide meaningful career development opportunities for the successful applicant. Two candidates were interviewed and a verbal acceptance of the offer has been made.

Planning for the Performing Arts Festival which has both a Drama and Music division. This program offers the opportunity for youth to build life skills through enhancing belongings within their club, being an active team member, and experience public performance in a safe and welcoming environment while exploring a spark of performing arts. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Jordan Blue, Zachary Rozmiarek)

The Area 6 4-H Educators have continued planning for the 2026 Speaking and Demonstration Contest. This event is held every year. It is a traditional program that allows youth to build their speaking skills. They also get practice researching and developing their piece. This year we had 24 participants who presented a total of 30 pieces. They had the choice to perform interpretive reading, speech, demonstration, or a combination of the three. Each participant gained valuable public speaking skills which will help them grow as leaders. Just as important, they also all had fun! (Zachary Rozmiarek, Jordan Blue, Rachel Hart-Brinson)

The sessions for Art U 2026 have begun! This program is a collaboration between Area 6 4-H and UW-Stout Art Education Department. There are 8 Art Education students from UW- Stout that are presenting lessons to the 4-H youth. Many of the lessons are presented online with the exception being that the members who are in 7th grade and older receive their lessons in person on the UW Stout Campus. The online format removes barriers to participation which is why this is the largest program that is offered to youth from all three counties in the area (Dunn, Eau Claire, Chippewa). It also gives valuable virtual teaching experience to the UW-Stout interns. (Zachary Rozmiarek, Jordan Blue, Rachel Hart-Brinson)

AmeriCorps-led 4-H club experience for 2-5th graders at the Altoona Boys & Girls club where they explored the science of slime and created abstract art, watercolor, and perler bead keychains. This club experience is designed to reach new audiences and provide them with access to additional 4-H programs like 4-H camp.

AmeriCorps planning for partner programming at the Augusta library and the Eau Claire Boys & Girls Club. These programs will provide access to high quality youth development programming and reach audiences that we currently do not serve.

Spotlight

4-H is a program that people may not be familiar with if their family was not involved with 4-H growing up. The Eau Claire Area School District no longer allows outside organizations to send home flyers. We have seen reduced numbers in the program due to reduced access to new families. To efficiently promote the 4-H program, we have looked to partner with other youth-serving organizations to offer hands-on events that also promote 4-H to new audiences. The library is a natural partner. We have partnered with the LE Phillips Memorial Library in the last four years to have activity tables where youth and volunteers lead project learning activities and the library promotes the program to their audience. Rachel spent much of February coordinating presenters, ordering supplies, and planning for the 4-H Discovery Day to be held on February 28, 2026.

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Gracie Gray | 4-H Associate Educator



An activity session for youth in grades K–2 and their families, held in collaboration with the Eau Claire Community Humane Association and the Eau Claire County 4-H Dog Project, where participants engaged in a hands-on, service-oriented learning experience about the role of the humane society and the importance of responsible pet ownership and dog training, they also created adoption valentines to display on dog kennels, helping promote adoptable animals. Through this effort, youth-built awareness of humane societies, practiced kindness and compassion toward animals, developed a sense of responsibility, and experienced generosity by serving others.

Planning for a hands-on Spring Art Workshop Series for youth in grades 3–8. The goal is to teach canvas painting techniques, explore different methods for working with clay, and create beaded fish using small beads and wire, so that youth build artistic skills, express creativity, gain confidence in trying new mediums, and experience a safe, supportive learning environment.

Planning for 4-H activity tables for youth attending the Chippewa Valley Builders Association Home and Garden Show in collaboration with Lampert Lumber. The goal is to provide hands-on activities that allow youth to explore potential sparks in art and building while learning about 4-H, so that youth have opportunities to build confidence in creating their own products and to develop safe habits when using handheld tools.

Planning for a literacy enrichment activity titled "Reading Round-Up" for Cloverbud-aged youth. The goal is to engage young learners in interactive story experiences, including creative movement, character creation, story sharing, and a read-aloud, so that youth build excitement about reading/storytelling, and develop creativity and self-expression in a supportive environment grounded in positive youth development practices.

Planning for a 4-H Garden Project, a spring and summer project with biweekly meetings, for youth in grades 3–13. The goal of this program is to provide hands-on learning experience in garden planning, planting, maintenance, and harvesting, so that youth develop practical gardening skills, build confidence and responsibility, and discover personal interests and sparks that support lifelong learning.

Planning for a Cloverbud Stuffed Animal Show at the county fair, for youth in grades K–2, in collaboration with the Eau Claire County Fair. The goal is to provide a supportive, activity-based learning experience where youth practice basic showmanship skills within a positive and age-appropriate showing environment, so that youth can build confidence interacting with adults, develop early showmanship and preparation skills, and explore potential interests in animal projects and future participation at the Eau Claire County Fair that may become a spark area.

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

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programmatic Institutes, which collectively identify opportunities to address statewide needs.

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

Upcoming Events

- March 14, Container Gardening: Growing Big in Small Spaces at the 2026 Traditional and Green Skills Event 9:30
- March 14, Project Exploration Day 9-12pm, Extension Office
- March 13 4-H Volunteer Retreat, Extension Office
- March 18, Planting Seeds Enriches Youths Lives, Bloomer Public Library 3:45-4:30
- March 20, Healthy Water Summit CVTC West Campus 8:30-3:30
- March 24, Cattle Feeding and Management
- March 24-26, 4-H Art Workshop Series, Extension Office 4-5pm
- March 25, Gardening for Life, Bloomer Public Library 2:00-3:00
- March 27, Chippewa Valley Forage Council
- March 31-May 5 WeCOPE virtual, free ([register here](#)) 11:30am-12:30pm
- April 2, Youth for the Quality Care of Animals presentation, Pleasant Valley Community Center 6:30pm
- April 7, Cloverbud (grade K-2) Earth Explorers program, Extension Office
- April 8, Save a calf, save a cow
- April 15, Central Wisconsin Housing Summit, UW-Stevens Point
- May 13-15, Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference, Green Lake, External & Internal Audience
- June 23-25, In Pursuit of Place Summit, Lambeau Field Green Bay, External & Internal Audience
- May 16, Native Plantings and Why They Matter, Chippewa Valley Technical College, 9:00-10:00

Value Added Programming

A training session for manure applicators and farmers where participants learn to apply manure safely and accurately to keep themselves safe, protect the environment, and increase farm profitability. (Jerry Clark, Anastasia Kurth, Jordyn Sattler, Kevin Erb)

An educational dog-safety program for youth and families, where participants learned how to safely approach dogs and practiced reading canine body language to support safer interactions and reduce the risk of dog-related accidents. A total of 30 youth and adults participated. Led by AmeriCorps Member, Emma Bruder, serving Chippewa County. (Jordan Blue)

Planning for a Healthy Water Summit for farmers, decision makers, elected officials, and industry and agency professionals in collaboration with county public health and land conservation departments. The goal is to increase water quality awareness by providing local information that enables community members to make informed decisions. (Jerry Clark, Amber Gilles, Kristi Peterson, Garret Zastoupil, Jeanne Walsh, Margaret Murphy, Ryan Sterry, Todd Prill)

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Between January and December 2025, Covering Wisconsin offered 18 virtual training courses for health insurance enrollment assistants and other professionals located throughout Wisconsin. The 503 registrants were educated on Medicaid, BadgerCare Plus, and HealthCare.gov Marketplace eligibility and enrollment policy and program processes to enable effective application help and successful consumer coverage enrollment and retention. Our webinars have up-to-date information regarding health care policy changes and updates, complex case support, fixing coverage for consumers that have been victims of health insurance enrollment fraud, Special Enrollment Periods, and guidance for meeting both federal and state licensing requirements. (Elizabeth Rothe, Adam Vanspankeren, Allison Espeseth)

Continued planning and support of the Market Match Program in collaboration with the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market through acquiring funding and educating the community about the program. The goal of this effort is to ensure FoodShare eligible community members continue to receive free Market Match dollars to increase access to local, nutritious foods. (Margo Dieck, Sandy Tarter, Kristi Peterson)

Planning for a Partnership Summit across Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties in collaboration with partners who work on food insecurity, housing, transportation, and childcare. The goal of this effort is to provide education on local infrastructure through a panel discussion and utilize collective action to achieve common goals around destigmatizing messaging, creating a community action toolkit, and building a funding infrastructure. (Margo Dieck, Deanna Wiersgalla, Garret Zastoupil)