

# Extension Eau Claire County

## March 2026 Report

### Dashboard Report January - March

This dashboard provides a snapshot of how Extension connects with community members through both in person and online engagement across the county and region. These numbers reflect the frequency and breadth of those connections rather than unique individuals or depth of impact and should be considered alongside program outcomes to fully understand Extension's value.

206	Number of coalition, partner, and workgroup meetings
107	Number of presentations, programs (online and face to face), and outreach events
4785	Number of participants served in presentations, programs (online and face to face), and outreach events
92	Number of public requests for information from the Eau Claire Extension Office
<b>Online Presence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Newsletters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Clover Leaves</i> is a bi-weekly 4-H newsletter distributed to 217 members and subscribers</li> <li>○ <i>Tri-County Connection</i> is a quarterly area wide newsletter distributed to 1.5 K subscribers</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Social Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4-H Facebook: 739 Followers, 206 Content Interactions, 9.6K views</li> <li>○ Extension Facebook: 952 Followers, 127 Content Interactions, 11.3 K views</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

### Upcoming Events

- *Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities Conference 2026. May 13-15, Green Lake, External & Internal Audience*
- *In Pursuit of Place Summit, June 23-25, Lambeau Field Green Bay, External & Internal Audience*
- *Central Wisconsin Housing Summit, April 15, UW-Stevens Point*
- Chefs-in-Training Day, April 9th at the River Source Family Center in Chippewa Falls, WI
- Parasite patrol plus FAMACHA (sheep and goat workshop) - April 25 Govin's Farm
- 4-H Activity Table at the Eau Claire Marathon Family Fun Kids' Zone, May 2, at Carson Park
- Cloverbud (K-2) LEGO Play and Build program, May 5, at the Extension Office
- Cloverbud (K-2) Calm Bodies, Kind Minds program, May 26, at the Extension Office
- [Transitioning to Native Plantings Conference](#) May 16 CVTC Energy Center
- [Academy for Lifelong Learners](#) June 2 UWEC
- Pollinators at Lake Wissota State Park June 27

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### Agriculture

For updated Valley E-Newsletters click [here](#)

Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



*A summit for community members where participants learned about surface and groundwater quality and effects on human health and the environment to make decisions to keep themselves safe and protect the environment.*

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

*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.*

*A presentation for the UW-Madison Alumni Association San Diego Chapter as part of Founder's Day Celebrations where members learned about research with malting barley and hops for the craft brewing industry to increase knowledge about Extension's work and connect with UW-Madison alumni in San Diego.*

### Spotlight

*A summit for community members where participants learned about surface and groundwater quality and effects on human health and the environment to make decisions to keep themselves safe and protect the environment.*

*Ground and surface water quality is a major concern in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire counties. Some areas of the counties have up to 20% of private wells above the 10ppm concentrate of nitrate in water. Education and information about how ground and surface water moves and can become impaired from contaminants is needed for community members to help them make good decisions about their management of the landscape. A Healthy Water Summit was held for community members to learn about the importance of surface and groundwater quality. Goals of the summit were to increase awareness of how decisions made on the landscape affect both ground and surface water quality and to increase awareness of local resources addressing water quality and human health. Speakers and topics included, Interaction of Soil, Water Use, and Aquifers, Dr. Mallika Nocco, UW-Madison; Movement of Nutrients and Soil, Dr. Steven Hall, UW-Madison; Monitoring Water for Healthy Communities, Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties Public Health Departments; How Garden Practices Protect Our Water, Margaret Murphy, UW-Madison Division of Extension; Understanding PFAS and Other Synthetic Contaminants, AJ Jeninga-Nehls, UW-Madison Division of Extension; Conserving Water, Soil and Nutrients on the Local Landscape, Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties Land, Water, and Forestry Conservation Departments; Student Involvement to Protect Water Quality, Ben Halverson, CVTC; Water Quality and Your Home Budget, Jeanne Walsh, UW-Madison Division of Extension; and Nitrogen Management Research and Education on Local Farms, Jerry Clark, UW-Madison Division of Extension. Fifty-nine community members attended the summit. A post-meeting evaluation indicated an overall increase in knowledge of 1.35 on a five-point Likert scale. One participant commented on the evaluation, "I loved learning about the different contaminants in water and what we can*

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*do as community members to help our water. It leaves me with the question, what can I personally do to make a difference." Plans are to discuss next steps for educational cross-programming on water topics.*

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



*An outreach and public relations effort for farmers where farmers and the public increased awareness of extension resources to connect and build relationships and improve their lives and farms. (Ryan Sterry, Amber Gilles, Bill Halfman, Deanna Wiersgalla, Jeanne Walsh, Jerry Clark, Joy Weisner, Kristen Bruder, Kristin Peterson, Margaret Murphy, Margo Dieck, Teal Polzin, Zachary Rozmiarek)*

*A presentation to the Chippewa Valley Bankers Association, where lending professionals learned about farm demographics, trends, and production outlook in the Chippewa Valley. (with Jerry Clark)*

*A presentation for Agricultural Education students at UW-River Falls, where members learned about dairy and livestock programming, Extension career paths, and increased knowledge about Extension's work and mission.*

*An on-farm meeting with small ruminant producers, where participants learned about improving health and nutrition before weaning in goat kids (with Carolyn Ihde)*

### *Spotlight*

*The Chippewa Valley Bankers Association reached out for a presentation on the local agricultural economy and agriculture industry trends. The association also wanted a discussion on the outlook for commodity markets. A Chippewa Valley Agriculture Outlook was provided by Ryan Sterry and Jerry Clark to discuss the current economic state of Chippewa Valley Agriculture. Topics discussed included current Chippewa Valley farm demographics in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties from the 2022 Census of Agriculture. Topics also included current corn, soybean, dairy, and livestock market prices and trends, technology adoption and cost of production. Thirty-three Chippewa Valley Banker Association members attended the presentation. An email received from one of the coordinators of the event stated, "Thank you both again for coming. Very informative and timely information."*

### Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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*A garden program for garden club members that addressed garden undertakings now and before spring planting. The discussion included soil preparation such as soil testing and adding soil amendments; mulches, composting and what to plant when. This effort was designed to promote and/or remind gardeners of best practices when getting their gardens ready for the gardening season.*

*A program on container gardening for the public on how one can grow flowers, herbs, vegetables, or even some fruits in containers. Topics included selecting containers, growing mixes, plant care and container design. This effort was to promote gardening to suit many tastes even when space or mobility is limited.*

*A nature-based activity for people living with dementia and their care partners where individuals engaged in an activity to learn about owls found in Western Wisconsin. This effort was designed for participants to learn about the fascinating lives of owls, what makes them different from other raptors and encourages participants to spend time outdoors looking and listening to owls and other birds.*

*A presentation for the public on how individual landscaping decisions play an important role in the health of our water resources. Participants learned how rainfall and surface runoff moving across the landscape can carry soil particles, excess nutrients, and contaminants into nearby rivers, streams, and lakes, adversely affecting water quality. This effort was designed to raise awareness about these issues while offering practical strategies for homeowners to help reduce runoff, and capture rainwater, slowing its movement to allow greater absorption into the ground. These approaches not only help protect local waterways but also promote healthier, more sustainable home landscapes.*

*A gardening activity for youth where participants started a small garden in a pot and learned how to care for their container plants and explored the important role plants play in our everyday lives. This effort was designed to help engage youth in gardening, participate in positive socialization and understand the many benefits gardening and plants offer.*

*A garden program for the public that focuses on accessible and adaptive gardening strategies, to help people of all abilities continue to enjoy gardening as their needs change over time. Participants learn creative, practical ways to stay connected to gardening at every stage of life.*

*A garden program for the Dunn County HCE where participants learn about a variety of houseplants with a focus on succulents. This effort is designed to help participants understand the specific needs of indoor plants and help support good practices with plant selection and plant care.*

### 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 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)*

*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

*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: 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. 2/26/2026 - Meeting with Tim and Garret to talk about how to determine the best search structure for organizations and groups.*

### *Health & Well-Being*

Sandy Tarter  
FoodWise Coordinator

Joy Weisner  
FoodWise Educator



*Weekly meetings with WI Nutrition Incentive Network and Double Up Food Bucks team 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.*

*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.*

*Participation in the Eau Claire Health Alliance Coalition (ECHA) to promote the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities of Eau Claire County through collaborative and focused action. The Eau Claire Health Alliance is the result of a merger of two long standing coalitions in Eau Claire County: Eau Claire Healthy Communities and the Alliance for Substance Misuse Prevention.*

*Collaborating with Healthy Food in Schools Task Force with the ECHA to promote mental and physical well-being by improving availability and access to healthy food and physical activity, especially in underserved communities. This specific task force is interested in assessing interest and opportunities for increasing access to healthy food in three Eau Claire County schools, focusing on schools with a high proportion of students experiencing food insecurity.*

*Collaboration with the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market to introduce the Double Up Food Bucks program to the Organizing Team and local vendors at their spring meeting. This program will support sustainability with the Market Match program, infuse added value to vendors, and increase food access to people with FoodShare.*

*Reviewed and updated the 2021 Hunger Prevention Coalition contact list of 85+ former participants to support my HWB colleague's outreach for the upcoming (May) 2026 Partnership Summit: Building a Unified Strategy for the Chippewa Valley.*

*Collaborating efforts with Positive Youth Development (PYD)/4-H Educator and HWB Educator to collect nutrition tips/healthy recipes/physical activity information that can be shared with families facing mental health challenges to be shared with local Chippewa Valley agency partners.*

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*Strengthening the long-term sustainability of the Kids' Garden series at North River Fronts by supporting a Master Gardener Volunteer with UW-Madison approved garden education materials, nutrition-focused recipes, and produce-handling safety resources.*

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



*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)*

*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.*

*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.*

*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.*

*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 an alcohol-free events toolkit in partnership with Chippewa County Healthy Communities.*

*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. Recent efforts focused on creating age-appropriate talking points for adults talking with kids about mental health (see excerpt to the right).*

### Tips for Any Age

- Try to understand by listening
- Tell them their feelings matter
- Give your full attention
- Share your feelings, too
- Check in often
- Keep your relationship safe and steady
- Make talking about feelings normal
- Say sorry and ask how to make it right (hug, walk, etc.)
- Take breaks when needed

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### Spotlight

*As the late 2025 federal shutdown strained local resources, Extension staff engaged in conversations with key partners to identify immediate needs surrounding food access and how Extension could support those efforts. It became clear that while individual organizations were responding, they were often operating in silos. This situation underscored a broader opportunity for Extension to lead a unified approach to community resiliency, ensuring the Chippewa Valley is better prepared for future disruptions or crisis situations.*

### Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator  
**Celebrating 7 years of service!!**



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

*A 4-H club experience with the Altoona Boys and Girls Club where members of the club were able to sign up for a 4-H club, explore sparks, and build a sense of belonging. This collaboration allowed more young people access to the Eau Claire County 4-H program opportunities.*

*4-H Discovery Day at the Eau Claire Public Library was a program in collaboration with the library where 17 4-H youth and adults led activity stations for 51 attendees. Participants experienced hands-on learning opportunities and received information about the 4-H program.*

*Preparation for 4-H summer base camp and outpost camp registration to open. Camp is an important part of Eau Claire, Dunn, and Clark County's learn-by-doing programming for grades 3rd and up.*

*Project Exploration Day for grades K-5 where youth and adult volunteers lead a 45-minute hands-on learning session. This program provides leadership opportunities for older youth and spark exploration for younger youth so that they can build skills and feel connected to the 4-H program.*

*Planning for a take-home activity and resource packet for families to address mental health decline, stress, and promote parent-child interaction.*

*A volunteer retreat where adult and youth volunteers shared ideas, explored some PYD theory, gained resources, and made some decisions on what Eau Claire County 4-H should focus on in the coming year. This retreat helped people feel more connected to each other and confident in their role as a 4-H volunteer.*

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### Spotlight

*William Shakespeare penned the line, "All the world's a stage..." and it is so true. As humans, we are constantly presenting information to our friends, our family, or our co-workers. Despite (or maybe because of) this, the number one fear in the US is the fear of public speaking. The best way to overcome this fear is to practice in low-stake environments. The Tri-County Performing Arts Festival provides an opportunity for young people to perform a song, dance, or dramatic piece. They can perform as a group, as a duet, or a solo act. Group dramatic and musical presentations provide structure and support for young people to build confidence presenting in front of an audience. The group process also builds a sense of belonging within the 4-H club. Sixty-nine individual youth explored a "spark" in performing arts on March 7. There were nine drama entries, two dance entries, and eleven musical entries. Recognition of their efforts boosted confidence and honored their hard work. Judges said that the quality of performance was very high this year. It was a joy to see everyone's hard work shine on stage. The two top dramas were from Eau Claire County. Congratulations to the Eau Claire Clovers and Pleasant Hill Go Getters 4-H clubs.*

Gracie Gray | 4-H Associate Educator



*Activity tables for youth attending the Chippewa Valley Builders Association Home and Garden Show, where 90 youth participants engaged in hands-on art and building projects while learning about 4-H and practicing safe use of handheld tools in collaboration with Lampert Lumber. Through this activity, youth explored potential sparks in creativity and construction, built confidence in creating their own products, and were introduced to opportunities for continued learning and skill development through 4-H.*

*Planning for an Earth Day-themed program called "Earth Explorers" for Cloverbud-aged youth, where participants learn about caring for the planet through a read-aloud, group discussion about pollution and the 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), and a recycled art project using plastic bottles. Through this activity, youth will build early environmental awareness, practice responsible waste habits, and develop creativity while learning how their choices can help protect the Earth.*

*A literacy enrichment activity titled "Reading Round-Up" for Cloverbud-aged youth, where participants engaged in interactive story experiences including creative movement, character creation, story sharing, and a read-aloud. Through this activity, youth build excitement about reading and storytelling while developing 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,*

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

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

### Value Added Programming

*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)*

*In February 2026, an in-person Save a Calf, Save a Cow dairy workshop with Spanish interpretation provided dairy producers and workers with practical skills in calving preparation, obstetric techniques, and newborn calf care to strengthen caretaker confidence and support herd health and farm economic viability. (Sandy Stuttgen)*

*A four-part Focus on Forage webinar series for forage growers, livestock producers, agency staff and agricultural consultants where research-based forage management solutions are shared to optimize forage yield and quality to improve animal performance and overall farm profitability. (Liz Gartman)*

*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*

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*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)*

*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)*