

Upcoming Events

- *In Pursuit of Place Summit, June 23-25, Lambeau Field Green Bay, External & Internal Audience*
- *Cloverbud and Family Garden Workshop, 4-H Cloverbud (K-2) Program, June 26th, 9-10:30 am, Extension Eau Claire County Office*
- *The Garden Hour June 20 at 10 a.m. Chippewa Falls Community Garden is a monthly opportunity to enjoy family activities and ask your garden questions.*
- *Family Pollinator Program June 27 at 10 a.m. Lake Wissota State Park celebrating National Pollinator Week June 22 - 28.*
- *Planting summer containers at the Altoona Public Library Wednesday July 15th from 6-7 PM.*
- *WeCOPE virtual series. Thursdays from 11am-12pm from June 25-July 30. [Register here.](#)*

Agriculture

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

Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator



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 N fertilizer resulting in more sustainable corn production and farm profitability, and reduce risk to ground and surface water.

A podcast where listeners will learn about early season hops management and production in Wisconsin to increase knowledge of opportunities and challenges of hops to provide a local ingredient to the craft brewing industry and potentially increase farm income.

A podcast where listeners will learn about growing saffron in Wisconsin to increase knowledge of opportunities and challenges of growing saffron to diversify their cropping system and potentially increase farm income.

An on-farm research study to better understand barley varieties for the malting industry and nitrogen application rates. Results from this study will help farmers make decisions on barley variety selection and nitrogen application rates improving barley quality and reducing risk of nitrogen moving to ground and surface water.

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.

A series of alfalfa measurements including PEAQ stick measurements, scissor clips, and alfalfa weevil sweeps that will help to better understand optimum alfalfa harvest across Wisconsin. The results of this study will help forage growers to

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determine what techniques can best predict optimum forage harvest timing to improve first cutting forage quality for livestock. (Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

Spotlight

Saffron is the most expensive spice in the world and has potential to be grown more extensively in Wisconsin. Some farms in Wisconsin have grown saffron in the past and researchers and farmers are experimenting with production practices to re-introduce the crop to Wisconsin as an avenue to increase farm income. A podcast was held through the Cutting-Edge Podcast series to provide an update of growing practices and market potential for saffron in Wisconsin. Regional Educators Ann Kowenstrot, Racine and Kenosha Counties, and Jerry Clark, Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties, hosted the podcast to provide updated information. Guests of the podcast were Dr. Margaret Skinner, University of Vermont Research Professor, Extension Entomologist with the North American Center for Saffron Research and Development and Dr. Richard Bamford, Microbiologist and Research Technician, University of Vermont. Christian Schneider, Assistant Director of the Office of Digital Solutions and saffron hobby grower also participated to provide grower insight and challenges. The podcast is available on the Crops and Soils Program Emerging Crops Topic Hub and will be evaluated through interaction with the podcast.

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



A study to better understand production practices and costs to raise replacement dairy heifers. Results from this study will help dairy producers and their advisors benchmark costs and make decisions on the number of heifers farms can afford to raise.

An educational article for the Wisconsin Agriculturalist magazine, for farmers and ag industry professionals, focusing on the challenges young beef cows face after their first calf and management strategies to help them reach their second calving.

An in-person workshop for sheep and goat producers that presented information on internal parasite management. Participants gained hands-on experience conducting FAMACHA and measuring internal parasite egg counts.

Spotlight

Overusing deworming products has led to resistant parasite populations, making internal parasites harder to control. Resistant parasite populations are challenging to manage, can be transferred by animal movement between farms, and, when left unmanaged, may lead to serious illness or death. To address this, educators developed a hands-on workshop to teach sheep and goat owners practical parasite control strategies. Participants learned how parasites develop and spread, how to reduce exposure, and how to monitor infections using simple techniques like fecal sample testing and anemia checks (FAMACHA). By gaining these skills, producers can better protect animal health and reduce financial losses. After the workshop, most participants said they planned to change their parasite management practices and would recommend the training to others.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator
Celebrating 7 years of service!!

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



An in-person hands-on class to teach at-risk youth how to plan, plant and tend a vegetable garden. Participants learn about soil health, plant selection, techniques for small-space gardening and garden maintenance so they can learn to grow their own food and experience the wellness benefits of gardening including increased access to healthy foods, stress relief, focus recovery and a sense of accomplishment.

Staffed an Extension table at the Compass IL Annual Resource Fair for the public to provide information on horticulture and other Extension programs and upcoming events. This effort was to provide information and raise awareness on available resources to the public.

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 pruning spring blooming shrubs, growing tender bulbs, and tips on frugal gardening as well as timely topics from Wisconsin Yard & Garden Weekly. This ongoing effort is designed to keep participants connected to current horticulture topics, gardening tips and concerns and includes links to many other articles as well as upcoming events.

A live radio interview for the public where we touched on what to plant in your vegetable garden now. Listeners learned about plant selection, spacing, mulching and other seasonal gardening topics. This effort was designed to help listeners learn both about Extension Horticulture services and connect them with seasonal information.

An in-person presentation at a one-day garden conference at CVTC for the public on native plants. Participants explored why incorporating native plants into your landscape makes good sense and how research supports the many benefits they provide, including supporting biodiversity, strengthening food webs, and enhancing ecological health and resilience. This effort was designed to increase participants' knowledge of how native plantings can support a diverse and healthy landscape.

Spotlight

I was invited by the host of a live radio program called "Noonish" which covers a range of topics but is wanting to include more garden topics. My participation is an effort to reach a broader audience and to connect listeners with seasonal gardening information to let them know what's happening from Extension. The host shares questions submitted to their Facebook page as well as generates casual conversation based on his interests and knowledge of gardening.

Community Development

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Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator

Celebrating 2 years of service!!



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.

Planning for a leadership development program for local government employees in collaboration with HR leaders and city and county officials. The goal is to identify and leverage existing resources to design a comprehensive program framework, so that local governments can build organizational capacity, foster positive workplace cultures, and attract and retain the talent necessary to effectively meet the public's needs.

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. (with Tim Borud)

Spotlight

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator
Celebrating 19 years of service!!



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. Menomonie and Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Markets will be expanding their match programs from \$10 per week up to \$20 per week to participants. Sandy is Co-Coordinator of the WI Western Hub.

Collaboration with the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market to implement the Double Up Food Bucks program. This program will support sustainability with the Market Match program, infuse added value to vendors, and increase food access to people with FoodShare.

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.

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Participation in the Chippewa Valley Regional Partner Summit at Market on River with added support in the breakout conversations. The goal of this effort is to provide education on local infrastructure through a panel discussion and utilize collective action to achieve common goals through the facilitation design of Open Space Technology.

Participation in the TruWellness/Blue Zone Ignite community conversations in the Chippewa Valley regarding the food systems environment. The goal of this effort was to provide community members with an opportunity to discuss local strengths, challenges, and opportunities as a step towards assessing community readiness for future engagement and change.

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



The Chippewa Valley Partnership Summit was held for community advocates and leaders across Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties, where participants examined local infrastructure gaps and used Open Space Technology to co-create long-term resilience strategies. Through this collaborative effort, partners worked on strategies to promote a unified network for cross-sector collective action. A full breakdown of the summit's outcomes and next steps will be shared in the upcoming June Report. (Garret Zastoupil, Deanna Wiersgalla)

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.

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.

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 supporting the Eau Claire Express alcohol-free game, revising an alcohol-free events toolkit in collaboration with Chippewa County Healthy Communities, and supporting the alcohol-free landing page for Volume One.

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.' Current work is focused on planning for distributing mental health resources, planning for a film screening and resource fair in collaboration with UWEC, and updating existing resources.

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

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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



Compilation of promotional graphics and text into a twice-monthly newsletter titled, "The Cloverleaves." This newsletter is the primary way that programming opportunities are shared with families with the text and graphics used in the newsletter posted to Facebook for additional publicity.

Camp Counselor Training Day where high school camp counselors practiced leading their activity sessions, participated in team-building activities, and explored approaching connection conversations with curiosity. This training was to help prepare youth counselors to lead a high-quality camp experience.

Eau Dark (Eau Claire-Dunn-Clark) 4-H Camp Orientation zoom that gave an overview of both Base and Outpost camp. Camp orientations help prospective campers feel more comfortable at camp because both parents and campers know what to expect and can ask questions.

A rock painting activity for youth at the DeLong Middle School Juntos program where young people were encouraged to engage in creativity and paint a rock that they could take with them to encourage mental well-being.

A "New Family Orientation" where young people and their families learned about 4-H terms, the relationship to the fair, record books, and program expectations. This training was developed to support families as they approach fair enrollment season and start hearing about completing record books and is aimed at increasing retention rates and feelings of belonging.

Planning for a 4-day, 3-night Base and Outpost camp experience. Eau Dark 4-H camps aim to provide high quality programmatic experiences for campers and meaningful leadership experiences for high school camp counselors.

Planning for the end-of-year Juntos excursion to Camp Nawakwa where youth and families in the Juntos program enjoy arts & crafts, practice fishing, experience nature, play games, and roast s'mores. This program builds belonging and family connections while exploring sparks and building skills.

In-person Youth for the Quality Care of Animals presentation to 4-H Horse Project members. This training covers responsible animal treatment, medication withdrawal, biosecurity, and pillars of character and is a requirement for those young people exhibiting an animal that stays overnight at the fairgrounds.

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

Gracie Gray | 4-H Associate Educator



An outreach tabling event for families and children at the Eau Claire Marathon Kids' Fun Zone, where youth and families participated in hands-on activities including a collaborative puzzle mural, rock painting, and create-your-own bubble wands, while learning about 4-H opportunities and programs. Through this effort, participants increased awareness of 4-H, strengthened community connections, and experienced a sense of creativity, belonging, and engagement through shared art experiences.

A "Calm Bodies, Kind Minds" Cloverbud program for 4-H youth in collaboration with Emily Freeman, a youth yoga instructor. The goal is to help youth explore emotions, practice identifying how emotions show up in their bodies, and learn and apply mindfulness strategies such as deep breathing, yoga, and positive affirmations through interactive activities and reflection, so that youth build self-management skills, strengthen emotional awareness, and develop lifelong tools for coping with strong emotions in healthy, positive ways.

Planning for a garden workshop for Cloverbud youth and their caregivers. The goal is to teach garden caretaking and maintenance practices, so that participants can confidently care for and sustain home gardens, support family food growing, and build lifelong gardening skills.

An interactive STEM building workshop for Cloverbud-aged youth, where participants explored engineering and architecture concepts through guided LEGO challenges, brainstorming, and reflection activities while learning about real-world design constraints. Through this activity, youth strengthened problem-solving and creative thinking skills, gained hands-on STEM learning experiences, and developed a better understanding of how limitations influence innovation and construction in real-world settings.

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.

Planning for a Youth First Aid Day for youth in grades 4-7. The goal is to provide an engaging experiential learning day that teaches youth how to assess first aid situations, communicate effectively during emergencies, and respond to minor injuries, so that youth develop problem-solving skills, gain confidence in their first aid abilities, and explore current or potential spark areas related to health, safety, and helping others.

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

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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

Through this effort, our Navigators assisted 13,360 consumers with qualified health plan enrollments through the federal Health Insurance Marketplace and applications to Medicaid, supporting access to health care and improved health outcomes. (Adam Vanspankeren)

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)