

Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Dashboard Report

(April - June)

This dashboard provides a snapshot of how Extension is connecting 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
Online Presence - Newsletters <i>Clover Leaves</i> is a bi-weekly 4-H newsletter distributed to 230 members and subscribers <i>Tri-County Connection</i> is a quarterly area wide newsletter distributed to 1.8 K subscribers - Social Media 4-H Facebook: 739 Followers, 206 Content Interactions, 9.6K views - Extension Facebook: 961 Followers, 234 Content Interactions, 2.2 K views	

Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Agriculture

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

Jerry Clark | Regional Crops & Soils Educator **Celebrating 28 years of service!!**



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.

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 determine what techniques can best predict optimum forage harvest timing to improve first cutting forage quality for livestock. (Anastasia Kurth, Aerica Bjurstrom, Casey Lobdell, Jackie Mccarville, Jerry Clark, Jordyn Sattler, Kevin Jarek, Laura Flandermeyer, Luana Dantas Queiroz, Manuel Pena Pena, Ryan Sterry, Scott Reuss)

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, Joshua Kamps, Todd Prill)

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. (Jerry Clark)

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. (Jerry Clark, Amber Gilles, Ann Kowenstrot)

Ryan Sterry | Regional Livestock Educator



An educational display on direct marketing and beef at the Eau Claire County Dairy Breakfast. In addition, a farmer-led watershed council, crops and soils program, and area six Extension information was promoted (with Jerry Clark).

An outreach and public relations effort at Beef Night Out for farmers and the general public to increase awareness of the Extension livestock program's direct marketing resources to

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

build relationships and improve their lives and farms. This was an opportunity to connect with beef producers in the area, as well as introduce myself to individuals I have not worked with yet.

Ryan helped review and co-write two news articles for beef producers on best management practices and current research in livestock systems. Articles like these keep livestock producers up to date with local and regional livestock news, market trends, and production ideas to help increase the economic viability of producers.

Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | Horticulture Educator

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



An in-person presentation at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire Academy for Lifelong Learners annual conference on accessible and adaptive gardening strategies that help individuals of all abilities continue gardening as their needs change over time. Participants learned about research demonstrating the lifelong physical, mental, and emotional benefits of gardening and explored practical approaches for adapting to changing abilities in order to experience benefits such as stress reduction, attention recovery, improved strength and balance, and sense of accomplishment.

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 included information on shade gardening, peonies, the Ruby-Throated hummingbird and the herb, rosemary. 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. (Margaret Murphy, Amber Gilles, Jerry Clark, Ryan Sterry)

An in-person class for middle school aged 4Hers from Dunn and Eau Claire Counties on pollinators commonly found in Wisconsin. Participants learned about the importance of pollinators, the pollinator / plant relationship, how flowers attract pollinators, and the pros and cons of being a generalist or specialist pollinator. This effort was designed to help youth understand the importance of pollinators, the challenges they face and how we can support them in our own backyards. (Margaret Murphy, Rachel Hart-Brinson, Zachary Rozmiarek)

In-person opportunity for the public at the Lake Wissota State Park on pollinators in celebration of Pollinator Week. Participants were offered a tour through a well-established pollinator garden together with information on pollinators and native plants. This effort was to encourage individuals to adopt gardening practices that support pollinator habitat and health throughout the year.

A monthly in-person opportunity for the public to visit the Chippewa Falls Community Garden, ask gardening questions, and explore seasonal topics in more depth. In June, we focused on pollinators. Participants learned the value of creating ecological niches in their landscape, allowing urban areas to support a host of different insect pollinators. This effort is to encourage individuals to adopt gardening practices that support pollinator habitat and health throughout the year.

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

A second in-person hands-on class for at risk youth focused on signs of pests in their vegetable garden. Participants learned about common diseases, insect pests and other issues that may affect their vegetable garden and the importance of early detection. This effort was to help young gardeners understand how to recognize and sustainably manage common pests found in a vegetable garden.

Delivered an in-person class for middle school aged 4Hers from Dunn and Eau Claire Counties on pollinators commonly found in Wisconsin. Participants learned about the importance of pollinators, the pollinator / plant relationship, how flowers attract pollinators, and the pros and cons of being a generalist or specialist pollinator. This effort was designed to help youth understand the importance of pollinators, the challenges they face and how we can support them in our own backyards.

Spotlight

Gardening for Life is a program focused on accessible and adaptive gardening strategies that help individuals of all abilities continue gardening as their needs change over time. Often older adults are interested in this program and represent nearly 20% of the population in each of the three counties I serve. After walking, gardening is reported as one of the most popular leisure activities among seniors. Recognizing this, I saw an opportunity to offer strategies and techniques that support older adults in continuing—or discovering—gardening as a way to stay active, engaged, and vital as they age and experience benefits such as stress reduction, attention recovery, improved strength and balance, and sense of accomplishment.

Community Development



Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator

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

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.

Spotlight

See the Partnership Summit collaborative effort below.

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Health & Well-Being

Sandy Tarter
FoodWise Coordinator



Joy Weisner
FoodWise Educator



FoodWise at the Farmers Market! Collaborating with the EC Downtown Farmer's Market on Wednesday mornings weekly to offer a "Mystery Veggie" game and sample of that featured vegetable fresh from the market. Planning on visiting both Chippewa and Dunn Farmers Markets in July and August. This effort is an opportunity to promote Extension in our area.

Ongoing efforts include continued collaboration and relationship-building with new staff at the Western Dairyland Fresh Start Program to sustain a nutrition education series for at-risk teens and young adults. The series focuses on nutrition, food preparation and cooking, and food safety, with the goal of empowering participants to adopt healthier lifestyles through building practical skills for preparing nutritious snacks and meals at home.

Collaboration with the Eau Claire Downtown Farmers Market to implement the Double Up Food Bucks Wisconsin program. This program will support sustainability with the Market Match program, infuse added value to vendors, and increase food access to people with FoodShare. The market will receive added marketing supplies, vouchers, and support from UWEC students for program implementation.

Continued support strengthening the sustainability of the Kids' Garden series at North River Fronts by sharing out UW-Madison approved garden education materials, such as nutrition-focused recipes and produce-handling safety resources with the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley.

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. 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. Current work is focused on creating two new resources for Eau Claire County schools—Healthy Classroom Snack Ideas and Healthy Concession Stand Ideas—to community partners and organizations.

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.

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator



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 [promoting sober events in the Chippewa Valley through VolumeOne](#), supporting the alcohol-free Eau Claire Express baseball game, and coordinating the [How to Host](#)

[Alcohol-Aware Events](#) toolkit distribution to event organizers and bar/restaurant owners throughout the Chippewa Valley.

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 compiling contact lists for youth leaders and religious leaders who work with youth, with the intent to send mental health talking points and resources to empower these leaders to have conversations with youth when they notice them struggling with their mental health.

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.

A conference presentation where attendees learned how local data and people with lived experiences guide current initiatives and drive long-term, measurable impact in Eau Claire County.

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, Jennifer Park-Mroch, Margo Dieck, Sara Ennocenti)

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.

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.

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Spotlight

See the Partnership Summit collaborative effort below.

Positive Youth Development

Rachel Hart-Brinson | 4-H Program Educator



Planning for the Eau Dark Summer 4-H Base and Outpost Camps where young people make new friends, try new things, build resilience, and gain skills. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)

Juntos family day camp excursion to Camp Nawakwa where youth and families in both the Delong and South Middle School programs enjoyed arts & crafts, fishing practice, hiking, soccer, and roasting s'mores. This program builds belonging and family connections while exploring sparks and building skills.

An outreach table at Hmong Youth Day, a program put on by the Eau Claire Area Hmong Mutual Assistance Association, where we provided information to families about 4-H and had a rock painting activity for young people. This activity increased the awareness of 4-H in the community and provided an engaging, hands-on activity for young people to participate in.

Final Camp Counselor training where youth in grades 9-13 practice addressing challenging camp scenarios, making final camp preparations, and engage in teambuilding activities to provide a high-quality camp experience. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)

A 4-day camp experience for those in grades 3-6 where young people tried new things, made new friends, and built resilience with the support of older 4-H youth and caring adults. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)

A four day 4-H Outpost camp where youth in grades 6-8 slept in tents, cooked over the campfire, made new friends, and experienced hands-on learning & career discussions with guest speakers in order to provide a high-quality camp experience with outcomes in skill-building in independent living, cooperative participation, developing resilience, and career exploration. (Rachel Hart-Brinson, Seth Harrmann, Zachary Rozmiarek)

Led a small group and acted as the adult leader for the Civic Engagement track at Summer Academy. Summer Academy is a 4-H-organized Career Exploration and leadership program on UW-Madison and Madison College campuses where youth in grades 8-11 explore potential careers through hands-on learning and experience campus resources.

Spotlight

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Many families are currently facing high stress and anxiety causing circumstances right now due to a variety of situations. Some families are not leaving their homes for safety reasons and children are struggling with coping skills. Entities have asked for connection and mental health resources that could be done while at home. Extension colleagues in the Eau Claire office across Institutes worked together to curate university/official research backed resources and build a kit focused on stress, coping, mental health, and healthy practices. The kits were offered to multiple counties. Eleven different entities requested a combined 350 kits to distribute to youth or clients in Eau Claire, Vernon, and La Crosse Counties so far. In Eau Claire, we have distributed them to the Eau Claire Area School District and the Family Resource Center.

Gracie Gray | 4-H Associate Educator



Planning for a one-day, 3-hour art workshop called Art Sparks 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 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.

A "Calm Bodies, Kind Minds" Cloverbud program for 4-H youth, where participants explored emotions, identified how feelings show up in their bodies, and practiced mindfulness strategies like deep breathing, yoga, and positive affirmations. Through this program, youth built self-management skills, strengthened their emotional awareness, and developed lifelong tools for coping with strong emotions in healthy, positive ways.

A biweekly spring and summer garden project for youth in grades 3–13, where participants learn hands-on skills in garden planning, planting, upkeep, and harvesting. Through this seasonal program, youth develop practical gardening skills, build real responsibility and confidence, and discover personal interests and sparks that support lifelong learning.

An interactive 4-H educational station at the Field Trip on the Farm event for kindergartners from Sherman Elementary, where participants learned about Wisconsin agriculture and made a custom trail mix using local products. Through this activity, these young students connected the food they eat to local farms and built an early appreciation for where their food comes from.

A hands-on first aid session for youth in grades 6–9, where participants learned to handle emergency situations, communicate clearly, and treat minor injuries. Through this camp activity, campers developed real problem-solving skills, built confidence in their ability to help in an emergency, and explored new interests in health, safety, and leadership.

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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

Collaboration Across Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties

Margo Dieck | Health and Well-Being Educator

Garret Zastoupil | Community Development Educator

Deanna Wiersgalla | Community Outreach & Office Operations Associate

The 2026 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. Anticipated next steps include a public-facing website, impact report, continuation of summit Q&A, resource sharing, and ongoing collaboration with summit workgroups.

Over 80 participants from Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties network and collaborate at the 2026 Partnership Summit (right).



Spotlight

Following the 43-day federal government shutdown in late 2025, many families struggled to afford food, which also stretched other areas of their budget like housing and childcare. Service providers also saw an increase in service demand to support the growing population in need of basic needs support. The goal of this summit was to move from "emergency mode" to a long-term resilience strategy—making sure that the next time a crisis hits, our regional networks are ready to help every family immediately. Overarching goal: create a collective response plan for future crises (building lessons learned from COVID and the 2025 government shutdown), with the intention of also providing better direction for community members who want to help their neighbors but aren't sure how to keep their impact local. 100 % of participants found participation in the Partnership Summit to be a valuable use for their time.

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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Extension Eau Claire County

July 2026 Report

programmatic Institutes which collectively identify opportunities to address statewide needs.

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

Upcoming Events

- July 8 & 9 at 1:00 p.m. – Extension table at the Northern Wisconsin State Fair for a presentation on beef quality.
- July 9 at 2:00 p.m. – Visit the Extension table at the Northern Wisconsin State Fair for a presentation on container gardening.
- July 11 at 11:00 a.m. – Visit the Extension table at the Northern Wisconsin State Fair for a presentation on companion planting in the vegetable garden.
- July 15 at 6:00 p.m. – Join us at the Altoona Public Library as we design and plant summer garden containers.
- July 18 at 10:00 a.m. – The Garden Hour at the Chippewa Falls Community Garden on common pests and diseases.
- July 14-16 – Beef tent at Wisconsin Farm Technology Days
- July 24 at 3 p.m. – 4-H Cloverbud Stuffed Animal Show at the Eau Claire County Fair
- July 28 at 6:00 p.m. – Beef cow-calf field day at Starck Century Farm near Cadott

Value Added Programming

Assisting an emerging entrepreneur gets connected with valuable resources and mentorships from across several counties. Entrepreneur is looking at developing a roasted coffee bean brand from Asian markets and has already visited Vietnam and other locations sourcing beans and a local roastery. Goal is to get them set up stateside with the necessary connections to further their business and production in the Driftless Region. (Hannah Altimus)

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)

Health insurance Navigator assistance for anyone in Wisconsin, where a total of 74,147 coverage services were provided directly to increase enrollment, retention, and appropriate use of benefits. 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, Allison Espeseth)

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