



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their full potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Kevin Struck, Community Development Educator

- An educational session for local clerks and other officials focusing on artificial intelligence (AI) and how it might be integrated into local government workflows. Ten “use cases” were explored, ranging from a chatbot that answers ordinance questions to a program that transcribes audio recordings of meetings and drafts minutes. Applications such as these could be helpful to clerks, who have numerous responsibilities but limited time and energy to fulfill them. Municipal clerks have numerous responsibilities but limited time and energy to fulfill them. Artificial intelligence apps have the potential to make the completion of some tasks easier and faster, however clerks are generally unaware of exactly how AI might be able to assist them. I held a 90-minute educational session that introduced the concept of AI, explored 10 “use cases,” and concluded with some caveats. On the post-session evaluation form, one of the attendees wrote, “I’m looking forward to seeing how AI develops and this was a great intro to how it can be applicable to our jobs as clerks.” The afternoon after the session, one of the attendees told me she had used an AI model to draft a request for proposal (RFP) in just a few minutes – something that typically would have taken her a couple of hours.
- Technical assistance for a local town to add a multi-family residential district to its zoning ordinance and also update the town’s comprehensive plan to ensure the new zoning district and the plan are consistent with each other. This new district will give interested developers more ways to provide a variety of housing options for the area, which is especially important given the current shortage of housing. The Town of Herman, which does not have professional planning staff, asked for assistance in adding a multi-family residential district to its zoning ordinance. Although the Town has seen limited interest in building such housing, it wants to be ready for any proposals that might be appropriate. Together we reviewed the Town’s current zoning ordinance, especially the existing two-family district, to determine our starting point. I then presented them with three multi-family residential district options, explained the advantages and disadvantages of each, and facilitated a discussion that led to a consensus on which option to choose. During this process, I noticed the Town’s Comprehensive Plan made no provision for multi-family housing, so I explained the steps that would be required to ensure consistency between the Plan and the Zoning Ordinance and provided templates as resources for amending their Plan. The Town has scheduled a plan commission meeting to consider the final draft of the new multi-family residential district. Expectations are that it will be approved. The Clerk has mentioned possible dates for a public hearing and asked me questions about the steps involved with amending the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



*The Extension Institute of **Human Development & Relationships** provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.*

Alicia Utke-Becher, Human Development & Relationship Educator

- UW Madison Extension Sheboygan County hosted a table at the Family Fun Fest in Fountain Park, Sheboygan, engaging families in conversations about Extension resources. Attendees learned about upcoming Family Engagement and Relationships programs to enhance family well-being. Families also received the Money Smart Wisconsin “Big Read” Financial Security Parent book guide, offering valuable strategies for financial literacy. This event provided families with access to educational resources, promoted awareness of family educational initiatives, and aimed to empower community members with tools for financial security and well-being.
- A two-hour session for caregivers, where participants learned about managing stress while caring for an adult with a chronic condition to increase confidence in self-care behaviors. Participants identify signs and sources of stress, create an action plan, and practice meditation. The impact of this session is to enhance caregivers’ well-being and effectiveness in their roles, ultimately improving the quality of care for adults with chronic conditions.
- In collaboration with Sheboygan County Public Health and Healthy Sheboygan County, three action team meetings focused on childcare were conducted. During these meetings, we established the Sheboygan County Child Care Task Force, discussed challenges related to access to affordable childcare, and brainstormed solutions. This collaborative effort aims to enhance child care resources, making quality child care more accessible and affordable for families in Sheboygan County.

AGRICULTURE



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.

Crops

Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator

- A series of first cutting alfalfa height and maturity data collections using Predictive Equations for Alfalfa Quality (PEAQ) sticks and scissor clips for Eastern Wisconsin farmers and agriculture professionals to help them appropriately target harvest timing. Further, this effort provides data that can be valuable to making management recommendations and decisions throughout the growing season and beyond to increase feed quality and alfalfa persistence. Alfalfa is a key crop in Wisconsin, and proper management is important to ensure we optimize yield and quality for dairy producers. First cutting alfalfa provides the largest yielding crop in a multiple cutting system, but challenging spring harvest conditions can result in missed opportunities to meet producer needs. Additionally, late harvest can affect the overall yield and quality of an alfalfa field. In response to this need, I collected alfalfa maturity measurements and quality samples in Sheboygan and Fond du Lac counties, following the standard procedures set out by UW Extension. Resulting data was collected and shared with the State Alfalfa outreach specialist as well as producers and agriculture professionals in the four county region via e-newsletter.
- A regional agriculture newsletter for Fond du Lac, Sheboygan, Washington and Ozaukee county agriculture producers, industry representatives and agency staff that provides timely crop production updates, dairy and farm management resources and upcoming agriculture events. The goal is to create awareness of Extension programming and research in the region and maintain a connection between UW and the ag community.

Crop, dairy and livestock producers make key management decisions every day based on challenges related to markets, weather and farm goals. It is important for them to have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to help them choose production methods that help them achieve their goals. As a result, the Regional Ag Updates newsletter is prepared and e-mailed to approximately 900 ag producers, agency staff and agribusiness consultants that support farmers. This newsletter shares field trial opportunities, timely management updates and tools to support production decisions, along with UW Extension and partner event opportunities. This newsletter consistently has a 40% open rate and one recipient shared the importance of having upcoming local and statewide events listed in one place. It further has become a great partnership tool between Extension and local producer-led watershed groups, land and water departments and state agencies. This effort creates a greater awareness of resources available to support their farm production goals.

FOOD SECURITY, HEALTHY EATING, AND HEALTHY LIVING



FoodWise advances healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for families with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels. *FoodWise* reaches individuals and families through local community partners by providing nutrition classes in-person and virtually, indirect education (newsletters, etc.), and social media/marketing. *FoodWise* is an obesity prevention program that addresses policy, system and environmental changes through local and state public health efforts.

FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

Amanda Miller, FoodWise Coordinator

- Coordinated a meeting for leaders of different health coalitions to work together and communicate. The purpose of this meeting is to better coordinate efforts related to food insecurity, nutrition, and physical activity in the future.
- A Hmong interpreted class for community meal site recipients to learn about food safety. The goal of these classes is to introduce basic food safety tips and to prevent food-borne illness.
- Coordinated a meeting for office colleagues, where those from the Hmong community provided local history and information about their culture, roles and organization. The purpose of this meeting was to learn more about the strengths, needs and gaps in services for Hmong in Sheboygan County.
- Taught a series of 5 lessons on Discover MyPlate in all of the kindergarten classrooms at 7 different elementary schools. The goal is to introduce the 5 food groups and to encourage healthy eating at a young age.
- Facilitating the community health action team meetings in April, May and June. These meetings will bring community members and organizations together to develop the next 3-year plan to address public health needs in Sheboygan County.

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