



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*

Planning for a four-session, 2026 Focus on Forage webinar series for livestock producers, forage growers and agriculture consultants. The goal of the series is to provide timely forage management guidance to improve forage quality and meet farm productivity goals. (Liz Gartman)

- Dairy and livestock producers require high quality forages to meet the animal production goals on their farms. Using a quality forage base reduces feed inputs and leads to improved animal health, milk production and growth.
- There are many opportunities for forage growers to increase forage dry matter production and quality while optimizing input costs, and this series aims to provide research based solutions to these producers.
- The Focus on Forage planning team identified topics and speakers that address the key management challenges and opportunities that exist for forage growers. Ongoing planning will result in four scheduled webinars in February 2026 that will each address a specific topic area related to forage production.

Planning for a monthly Forage and Grazing workgroup meeting where Extension educators and specialists build relationships, provide project updates and share upcoming programs and resources to improve forage and grazing programming across the state. (Liz Gartman)

- Our forage and grazing work group spans several programs, as these areas are related to crop, dairy and livestock production. It was necessary to provide a space where all three programs can collaborate and share updates and challenges related to forage production and grazing across the state.
- Our response is to host a monthly meeting for the forage and grazing work group. An agenda is prepared and posted prior to the meeting and includes a local update, project updates, resource sharing and a discussion of a research update or publication.
- The meeting provides an important touch point for educators working in the forage and grazing space and allows educators to collaborate on similar projects and programs.

Dairy | *Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator*

A statewide program promoting humane dairy cow-handling practices for dairy cow handlers where the participants will learn to be aware of their own beliefs about working with cows, which affect how they interact with them. They will also learn how to form or maintain good habits, which will make the cows easier to handle and their job smoother. This program will be available in English and Spanish (Manuel Pena)

- A growing number of people worldwide are expressing concern about the treatment of farm animals, particularly dairy cattle. Sheboygan County is no stranger to that situation. Emphasizing that the actions and



attitudes of dairy handlers have significant implications both within and beyond the farm environment is key. Recognizing this need, we are developing a bilingual learning program aimed at improving dairy handlers' understanding, attitudes, and interactions with the cows under their care. The program seeks to promote evidence-based handling practices that enhance animal welfare, worker safety, and overall farm productivity. The initiative will begin with a pilot phase designed to gather feedback through observation and participant input, allowing for systematic refinement of the training materials. Once finalized, the program will be implemented on selected farms and rigorously evaluated to assess its effectiveness in fostering positive behavioral change and improving animal well-being outcomes.

A meeting for dairy farm managers and their workforce to present the progress of the Ag safety program we are developing for their use to gather their feedback and insights to help finalize and enhance the program's design and effectiveness. (Manuel Pena)

- On dairy farms, heavy machinery such as tractors and skid loaders plays a vital role in daily operations, but it also poses significant safety risks. According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Agricultural Safety & Health Program, tractors have caused the majority of non-highway farm fatalities in Wisconsin recently, and machinery is frequently involved in entanglement, crushing and other serious injuries. We are developing a training toolbox that farms can access at any time to support workforce education. These meetings are designed to gather feedback from farm managers and workers, helping us refine the program to ensure it's practical, effective, and tailored to the needs of those who will use it in our county.

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.

Truong Tran, Human Development & Relationship Educator

Powerful Tools For Caregivers

Family caregivers often face high levels of stress as they balance their own health and well-being while supporting loved ones with chronic or long-term conditions. In Sheboygan County, many caregivers also experience isolation and limited access to resources. To address this need, Sheboygan County Extension facilitated two *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* workshop series in October and November, offering one virtually and another in person to provide flexible, research-based support for the community's diverse caregiving needs.

The *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* program is an evidence-based, six-week series that equips caregivers with practical skills to manage stress, communicate more effectively, and prioritize their own health. Participants learned strategies that help reduce caregiver burden and improve overall well-being. The virtual series, co-facilitated in partnership with the Outagamie County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC), made it possible for caregivers from multiple counties to join from home—an important option for those balancing busy caregiving schedules.

The in-person series, offered in collaboration with Sharon S. Richardson Community Hospice and the Sheboygan County ADRC, created a welcoming space where caregivers could share experiences, build confidence, and connect with others who understand the challenges of caregiving. Sharon S. Richardson Hospice and the ADRC helped secure local sponsors to provide meals and respite care, ensuring participants could attend without added burden. Extension coordinated logistics, promoted the series, and co-facilitated each session, supporting caregivers in learning new ways to care for both themselves and their loved ones.

By combining virtual and in-person formats, *Powerful Tools for Caregivers* continues to strengthen the health and resilience of local families. Through these partnerships, Sheboygan Extension helps ensure that caregivers have access to the knowledge, community, and encouragement they need to thrive.

Positive Youth Development



Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

Sarah Feider, 4-H Program Educator

Planning a Club Leader/Officer Kick Off for 4-H Club officers with collaboration with adult volunteers. The goal is to provide ideas and activities so they can bring them back to their club to create a more engaging meeting. (Sarah Feider)

- In going to clubs the past year, it was observed that each club had very little interaction and engagement during them. At the beginning of the meeting, I posed three questions: 1. What is your favorite part about 4-H? Answers: Friends, the Fair, building relationships 2. What is your favorite part about 4-H meetings? Answers: Activities, Friends, Food 3. What is your least favorite part about school or meetings? Answers: Boring, Too Long. Of those who filled out the survey, 100% said that they felt that the meeting was engaging. 88% indicated that they learned something new. 100% said that they felt welcomed in the space.

A foods and adulting program for 9th and 10th graders at a High School in Sheboygan Area School District learned to create a one-pot pasta dish and homemade garlic bread to learn the differences between money management in ordering take out and cooking from home along with learning how to cook so they can become more self-sufficient in their adult years coming up. (Sarah Feider, Diana Hammer)

- Diana made connections with Sheboygan Area School District Staffers. They indicated the need to have a one hour program that was set for two different sessions where students could practice adulting. Knowing that typically youth tend to order takeout versus making food at home, it was decided to show them how to make a very simple one-pot pasta dish with very cheap ingredients that anyone can do from home with limited resources.

Planning for an Open House/Enchanted Forest Event in collaboration with the Humane Society, Sheboygan Food Pantry, and Culver's, where youth can come to a fun event to learn about what 4-H has to offer. Youth and parents will talk with project and club leaders to increase enrollment in 4-H to promote youth exploring their sparks. (Sarah Feider)

- In 2023, enrollment was at 564. In 2024, enrollment was 552. It is imperative to get the 4-H name back out into the public in Sheboygan County. Having an event where partners, projects and clubs can all come together to promote the community and 4-H will not only bring the 4-H name back to Sheboygan County, but get people talking about enrolling. This event was inclusive to everyone. Between the bouncy houses, ice cream and other food and drink to games, candy and activities, everything was free to those who came to this event.

Planning for a multi-county Winter Leadership Camp experience for youth ages 13 and above. (Penny Tank, Aimee Elkins, Amy Boelk, Carlea Liermann, Katrina Pionek, Megan Suehring, Sarah Feider, Tracy Keifenheim)

- Offering educational experiences for older youth is a priority in positive youth development. Winter Leadership Camp is an annual opportunity focusing on developing a variety of leadership skills. Educators from each of the counties collaborate to plan a schedule, theme, promotion, and other details for the event. Youth input is encouraged for parts of the planning. The impacts we are hoping to achieve are that youth will increase their



leadership skills, meet new people, learn about leadership opportunities in 4-H, and enjoy a winter camping experience.

A multi-day camp for youth in grades K through 3rd, where youth explored different sparks and built relationships with other youth who were interested and involved. This effort aimed to increase interest in sparks and have youth feel a sense of belonging. (Sarah Feider)

- Day Camp for Cloverbuds was a program that has been run annually. To allow for increased sparks and enrollment, Day Camp was 4 days in length. Of the 560 youth involved in Sheboygan County 4-H, 81 are Cloverbuds. Leaders indicated that it is difficult to find activities for Cloverbuds to do. Of the 81 Cloverbuds, 21 attended this year's Day Camp. Youth participated in the making of foods using recipe instructions, Lego creations, science experiments, team building activities, arts and crafts, a trip to Bookworm Garden, along with Master Gardeners partnering to create pollinator houses and insects created using reusable materials. According to the survey results, 100% of youth "Strongly Agreed" with the statement that they "felt welcomed in the space". Six youth ages 12 and up came to be leaders for Day Camp.

A situational analysis of youth empowerment opportunities and gaps in Sheboygan County so that program priorities can be determined for 2026. (Diana Hammer, Janeth Orozco, Sarah Feider, Truong Tran)

- Diana Hammer started on June 9 as Sheboygan County's half-time Positive Youth Development Educator. The role is focused on centering youth voices in spaces where young people and adults work together. The first priority is to meet youth and the adults who care about them to learn more about the strengths and opportunities for youth empowerment programming. In the last month, Hammer met with community leaders from Centro Comunitario La Cima, League of Women Voters, Sheboygan County Health & Human Services, Sheboygan County Juvenile Detention, Sheboygan North High School, and Plymouth High School. She also helped colleague Sarah Feider with both a cooking class for Central High School 9th & 10th graders (45) and enrichment activities for Change Academy students (12). With colleague Truong Tran, she visited with students and parents at Sheridan Elementary's Familias Club (8) and interviewed Sheboygan South High School club leaders (13) about their experience of Youth Voice. She also attended the Sheboygan County United Way's Youth in Nature working group, met with county board supervisors Henry Nelson and John Nelson, and five other youth development Extension colleagues as she continues to learn the role. By carefully listening to a variety of perspectives on youth empowerment, Hammer will be able to determine where to direct her efforts for maximum impact.

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