



## 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**

Presentations for attendees of the Midwest Forage Association Symposium where participants learned about fertilizer requirements and guidance for various forage crops, fertilizer economics, and the value of nutrient credits from legumes and manure. Through this effort, producers understand the importance of various crop nutrients as they pertain to forage yield and quality. They also have the knowledge needed to maximize their fertilizer dollars, and will consider strategically managing nutrient credits to lower overall cost of production and improve profitability. (Jordyn Sattler, Liz Gartman)

- Fertilizer is the largest variable expense for most farms, so it is important that growers make the most of their fertilizer dollars. This includes knowing which crop nutrients are the most important, how much of those nutrients are required, impacts on forage quality and yield, and how economics play a role in those decisions and affect profitability of the farm. To remind growers about the importance of fertilizing forages, a combination of presentations were delivered to attendees of the Midwest Forage Association Symposium.
- These presentations detailed the importance of essential crop nutrients, deficiency symptoms that can be observed when crop needs are not met, impacts on yield and quality, how to make fertilizer decisions using unbiased data and economic considerations, and how to strategize the use of nutrient credits from legumes and manure to lower cost of production.
- As a result, growers became more aware of tools and resources that are available to help guide informed decisions regarding fertilizer applications. This will allow farms to save money where they can and improve their financial sustainability.

A presentation for the 2026 Thinking Outside the Barn Nutrient Management meeting in collaboration with the Washington County Land Conservation department where I shared results from the 2025 Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program field trials and discussed how growers can become involved with the program. Through this effort, I brought awareness of the opportunity for farmers to perform on farm trials regarding nitrogen management to better understand the optimal nitrogen rates for their farm.

- Each year the Washington County land conservation department plans a nutrient management focused meeting for local growers. I was asked to provide an update and results from the two Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program sites in the county.
- I created a presentation with the plot layouts for the two sites, along with the 2025 results and pictures from the work that we completed. I also included the updates to the 2026 NOPP program that provides funding for smaller, more manageable projects that growers can participate in.



- I was able to respond to several questions about the program and what types of nitrogen studies can work within the NOPP framework.

### **Dairy | Manuel Peña, Regional Dairy Educator**

A weekly Thursday dairy radio segment for dairy producers, consultants, agency staff, and other industry professionals to share updates about state and local Extension resources, information, and events relevant to dairy operations. The goal of this effort is to maintain a regular connection between the dairy community and Extension resources, providing tools and timely insights to support informed decision-making related to herd management, nutrition, reproduction, farm profitability, among others. (Manuel Pena Pena)

- As another Agriculture Educator in my area has already built a strong connection with farmers through regular radio updates, I have been invited to contribute a dairy-focused segment as part of the daily Farm Report. This provides a valuable opportunity to engage an established agricultural audience and expand Extension's outreach within the dairy community. Through this segment, it is possible to share research-based, science information relevant to dairy producers, along with timely updates on educational events, resources, and tools that can support informed decision-making and strengthen farm viability. Agricultural producers use a variety of sources to obtain information, including radio. Each Thursday morning, I provide a UW-Extension dairy segment as part of the daily Farm Report. This segment focuses specifically on timely dairy production topics, herd management strategies, seasonal nutrition and health considerations, and updates on upcoming events, webinars, and educational opportunities relevant to dairy operations. Delivering this information through public media allows us to reach producers who may be underserved, unable to attend in-person programs, or unaware of Extension's agricultural resources. This expanded outreach strengthens our connection with the dairy community and helps ensure that research-based information is accessible, practical, and timely. Additionally, the segment provides dairy producers with greater insight into the work being done through Extension and creates consistent opportunities for them to engage in programs that support informed decision-making, farm profitability, environmental stewardship, and long-term business sustainability.

A regional agriculture newsletter for Sheboygan, Fond du Lac, 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. (Liz Gartman, Manuel Pena Pena)

- 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 the Dairy farmers of Sheboygan to have access to up-to-date information and opportunities to help them choose production methods that help them achieve their goals. The Regional Extension Ag Updates newsletter is prepared and e-mailed to approximately 850 ag producers, agency staff and agribusiness consultants that support farmers. In the winter months, the newsletter is sent monthly, with issues every two weeks during the crop production months. 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.



## 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

- Sheboygan County Extension delivered a digital literacy workshop designed to help older adults navigate today's increasingly online world with greater confidence and safety. Many older adults in the community report uncertainty around cybersecurity, password management, cloud storage, and identifying trustworthy online information. These challenges can limit access to essential services, healthcare resources, and communication tools.
  - The workshop focused on practical, research-based strategies for staying safe online. Participants learned how to create and manage strong passwords, recognize fraud and impersonation attempts, understand cloud storage, and identify credible sources of information. The session included hands-on guidance to help participants navigate their phones more efficiently, manage notifications, and update compromised passwords. Materials were adapted from national Extension digital education resources to ensure alignment with current cybersecurity and media literacy best practices.
  - Evaluation data showed meaningful increases in participant confidence and skill. Many reported applying what they learned to better protect their personal information, use digital tools more effectively in daily life, and access government programs and online services. By strengthening digital literacy among older adults, Extension is helping reduce vulnerability to online scams, increase digital inclusion, and support a safer, more connected Sheboygan County.
- Sheboygan County Extension continues to support *StrongBodies*, a research-based strength training and health education program designed for older adults. StrongBodies focuses on progressive resistance training to improve strength, balance, and overall functional fitness. The program also incorporates education on injury prevention and healthy lifestyle behaviors to support long-term well-being. Programs are being offered twice a week at the Aging and Disability Resource Center, Pigeon River Recreation Center, and statewide virtually this spring.
  - Older adults in the community face increasing risks related to physical decline, limited mobility, chronic disease, and social isolation. Barriers such as transportation, fixed incomes, and limited access to age-appropriate exercise programs can make preventive health efforts more difficult. StrongBodies addresses these challenges by providing structured, safe, and accessible classes led by certified instructors and supported by community partnerships.
  - Participants engage in regular exercise sessions adapted for varying ability levels, building strength and confidence over time. Outcomes extend beyond physical health. Participants report improved mood and energy, greater social connection, and increased confidence in maintaining an active lifestyle. At the



community level, StrongBodies contributes to stronger wellness networks and increased engagement in preventive health programming. Over time, sustained physical activity supports reduced chronic disease risk, increased independence, and improved quality of life for older adults in Sheboygan County.



## 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.

### **4-H | Sarah Feider, 4-H Program Educator**

A four day program, over the course of 4 weeks, where youth learned about life cycles, incubating chicks, the parts of an egg, observations, and engineering. (Sarah Feider)

- Youth are curious and interested in life cycles, this program offers an interactive and engaging way for youth to learn about a specific animal and watch it grow. The 4-H Chick Quest program has been an excellent curriculum to reach the needs of teaching youth about food, animal science and agriculture. It also provided an excellent opportunity to partner with a local youth organization. Youth learned about the incubation environment, care for incubating eggs, chick development stages, egg science (parts of the egg), the hatching process and baby chick needs. It also gave me the opportunity to talk about 4-H and what our program offers.

A sparks program for Middle School and High School students where students engaged in various activities throughout the school year to practice something new to them. Through this program, students will have greater implications on their intellectual, social, and emotional self. (Sarah Feider)

- The guidance counselor reached out to me to engage the youth at the school in areas that they were not necessarily familiar with. 4-H was a program that was unfamiliar to all students. In this particular school, the rural students do not or cannot participate in after school activities. Sarah Feider, 4-H Program Educator, partnered with the Sheboygan Area School District to bring 4-H and experimental learning to a new audience. Students engaged in activities through centering youth in the community, building belonging, and learning together - 4-H Core Values.

Planning for a multi-county Winter Leadership Camp experience for youth grades 7 and above. The goal of Winter Leadership Camp is to involve young people in a variety of workshops and experiences that build leadership and personal development skills so they can be better prepared in life. (Penny Tank, Aimee Elkins, Amy Boelk, Carlea Liermann, Katrina Pionek, Megan Suehring, Sarah Feider, Sarah Ferdon, 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. Winter Leadership Camp has been cancelled for the current dates due to extreme dangerous wind chills. We are in the process of rescheduling for February. 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. In addition, this year we are focusing on life skills like financial planning, sewing, first aid, bicycle repair, writing thank you notes, and more.



## **Positive Youth Development** | *Diana Hammer, Youth Development Educator*

Relationship building to learn of youth empowerment opportunities and gaps in Sheboygan County (Diana Hammer)

- 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. Hammer is meeting youth and adults to learn where civic engagement learning opportunities could be useful. Efforts in the planning stages include a civics workshop for 3rd-5th graders at Lakeview Community Library (Random Lake), County Government Days for Kohler, Central, and South High Schools, and a youth entrepreneurship workshop for 4-H Summer Academy.

In the last month, Hammer learned more about the research behind Positive Youth Development at Extension's state conference. Both the Thrive and Beyond Ready models emphasize preparing young people for work and life through intentional opportunities to 1) explore their interests, 2) partner constructively with adults, 3) feel a sense of belonging as they learn, and 4) actively participate and guide decisions in things that matter to them. Over time, young people who have these four experiences consistently grow to be healthy, productive, and engaged adults.

Organizations or groups that would like to review the ways they create these four experiences can [contact Hammer](#) or use this [Youth Adult Partnership Reflection Tool](#).



**Value Added** -*Sheboygan County Community members actively engage in UW -Madison Extension Regional and Statewide Program offerings. Highlights of these programs are shared in this section of the report.*

### Community Development

A facilitated conversation with nonprofit leaders in Northeast Wisconsin, where participants learned ways to track, gather data, and report for multiple grants to fulfill funder requirements, inform donors, and carry out the organization's mission. Total Reach: 13 Nonprofit Leaders from Eastern Wisconsin

A facilitated conversation with nonprofit leaders in Eastern Wisconsin, where participants learned about volunteer mental health, setting up a volunteer program, why people volunteer, why people continue to volunteer, and ways to support volunteers to carry out the organization's mission and involve more of the community. (Location type: Geography Served) Total Reach: 6 Nonprofit Leaders

Planning for a youth entrepreneurship workshop at the 2026 Summer Academy for 4-H members and non-members in collaboration with county and statewide Extension educators and community partners. The goal is to help young people explore their SPARKS and transform those passions into foundational business skills such as creativity, problem-solving, opportunity recognition, and early-stage planning, so that they are better equipped to grow as successful and sustainable entrepreneurs in their communities and across Wisconsin.

- Wisconsin Extension educators in cross-discipline areas and community partners have been working to expand a statewide initiative to empower youth in Wisconsin to explore various aspects of life. This year, the Community Development Institute and Educators working in entrepreneurial development and capacity building have been invited to help youth discover entrepreneurship by exploring their SPARKS and strengthening entrepreneurial education before transitioning to college or the workforce. This effort prioritizes access to critical early education and basic business skill development to help youth recognize needs for business development in their communities or how they can solve problems in their communities through entrepreneurship. The Summer Academy planning team and educators and statewide specialists from UW–Madison Extension’s Community Development and Positive Youth Development Institutes, partnered with organizations to host a two-day summer academy featuring educational workshops. The entrepreneurial workshop supports youth business skills development and entrepreneurial exploration as they plan for the future in transition to college or the workforce. Youth will explore and understand what resources are available to them across the state of Wisconsin. You will learn what an entrepreneur is and what entrepreneurship looks like across the state of Wisconsin. Summer Academy entrepreneurial workshop will run smoothly due to well-planned logistics. Youth will have information provided for take-home efforts to further explore entrepreneurship in their communities post the workshop.

### Health and Well-Being

Between January and December 2025, Covering Wisconsin offered 18 virtual trainings for health insurance enrollment assisters 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. Total Reach: 503 enrollment assisters and partners from all 72 Wisconsin



counties registered to attend at least one of the 18 professional education presentations offered by Covering Wisconsin in 2025.

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Manuel Peña <i>Regional Dairy Educator</i>	Diana Hammer <i>Positive Youth Development Educator</i>	Emily Lamb <i>Support Staff</i>
Kirtis Orendorff <i>Community Development Educator</i>	Truong Tran <i>Human Development and Relationships Educator</i>	Cassi Worster <i>Marketing Specialist</i>

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