

EXTENSION DODGE COUNTY MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

MARCH 2025

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.

Educators: Manuel Pena, Will Fulwider

A series of in person and virtual meetings with UW Madison - Extension colleagues, producer led conservation groups, USDA and Farm Service Agency partners, agriculture industry contacts and crop producers where we discussed opportunities for partnerships, ag community needs and programming gaps, to be able to develop an accurate needs assessment, that will lead to accurate programming that benefit all the different parties of the dairy industry in the region.

A workshop "Calving Management and Neonate Care in Dairy Cattle" for all the individuals that are involved in parturition, and calving management in dairy farms. We are creating an in person and bilingual event where participants will learn and reinforce their knowledge about obstetrics, care and support in the calving pen, neonate care and colostrum management, and how to maintain the success in the maternity areas. Through this effort we will increase the knowledge and good practices related to the earliest stage of life in dairy cattle, which will represent an increase in herd health, work safety and farm profitability.

A series of lightning talks organized for the Dodge County Farmers for Healthy Soils Healthy Waters annual soil health expo in Juneau to provide farmer attendees with latest updates of on-farm nitrogen research happening in the county.

- While the research occurring at the agricultural research stations across the state provides farmers with important findings, oftentimes these results are dismissed because they occur under specific conditions on a research station. On-farm research provides Extension with a tool to engage farmers in asking critical questions of their production systems as well as a tool for outreach with other farmers, crop consultants, and agronomists in the area. These talks, including one by myself presenting the results from the first year of the estimating nitrogen crediting from multi-species cover crops project, showcased results from studies analyzing the effect of nitrogen rates on winter cereal forage production and quality as well as a nitrogen rate study across 12 farms in Dodge County to determine optimum nitrogen rates for corn with funding from the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Project grants from DATCP.

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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest 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.

Educator: Patricia Malone

Planning for a 1st Impressions program exchange between Dodgeville and Columbus with Barry Hottman. The goal is for volunteers to develop a better understanding of what makes a community more appealing to inspire both communities to engage in actions that will strengthen their communities.

- I was approached by the Columbus Community and Economic Development Director. He has been struggling to get a key group to take action to improve the community's downtown and business area. I am at the beginning of my position in Dodge County and this program can spark interest in community development. My first step was to extend an invitation to other community development educators to see if they had a similar community interested in an exchange. Barry Hottman responded. He met to discuss the project and the process. We established a timeline and key actions along the way. We set June as the target month to conduct the exchange. The outcomes I am hoping to achieve include the following: A. Greater awareness of the tools/processes community development educators use to get local volunteers involved in community development. B. The participating communities will identify key action steps they will take. This type of programming can inspire communities to become more proactive. It increases their abilities and skills in building community.

Planning for a survey of local officials in collaboration with Matt Kures and Karl Green. The goal is to develop a better understanding of how local officials view housing issues in their communities so that we can provide more effective housing education.

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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).

Educator: Kimberly Lafler

Green Valley Life Academy is a community partner with FoodWise in Dodge County to provide nutrition education series for their participants. In this series participants learn about the importance of eating five food groups, being physically active, practicing food safety and food resource management. This effort was designed to guide and assist the young adults in this program to make healthy eating a positive experience which in turn will help with food choices and food security being made in the future.

Adults and seniors at the Beaver Dam Meal Site were able to take part in a series of Lunch and Learn nutrition lessons. Interactive lessons engaged seniors in learning about the food groups on MyPlate, reading nutrition facts labels, using herbs and spices in cooking, and heart healthy things to do and keep in your kitchen. Knowing what things are within their control and how making even small dietary changes can lead to better health, which can help to allow seniors to age in place.

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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



Human Development and Relationship programs in Dodge County focus on parenting, family relationships, aging, and financial education. We support resilient individuals and families from cradle to grave. Our programs offer research-based classes and resources for parents, caregivers, and professionals to promote child and family development. We also help families achieve financial well-being and build capacity among family-serving practitioners. Additionally, we support aging individuals with end-of-life planning and local partnerships. Responding to local needs our programs also promote mental health and well-being through evidence-based initiatives.

Educator: Pattie Carroll

In a recent professional development session I co-developed and conducted for early childhood educators in Dodge County, we focused on the importance of infant and early childhood mental health. The objectives of the class included enabling participants to describe key developmental tasks, select effective classroom practices, and choose family engagement strategies that support the mental health of the family. This training equipped educators with the knowledge and tools to create supportive environments that promote the mental well-being of children and their families. The session was attended by 21 participants. All attendees (100%) reported that they would implement at least one strategy to support mental health in infancy and early childhood. Additionally, 15 out of 21 participants felt comfortable implementing a family engagement practice. One participant specifically mentioned that she planned to use a co-regulation strategy with a child she had been experiencing challenges with.

In Dodge and Jefferson counties, the early care and education (ECE) profession is facing a critical crisis. Staff shortages and a fragmented support system for existing providers are threatening the very foundation of early childhood education. To combat these challenges, it is essential for ECE administrators to have opportunities to come together. By collaborating to solve problems, sharing best practices, networking, and building strong industry relationships, they can ensure the success and sustainability of their businesses. To address this urgent need, I established a bi-monthly consortium for early childcare professionals. This initiative will provide a dedicated space for ECE administrators to collaborate on solutions to common challenges. Research shows that networking and professional learning communities significantly benefit early childcare professionals. Networking helps professionals build supportive communities, share best practices, and collaborate on solutions to common challenges. This exchange of ideas and experiences enhances both professional development and personal growth, ultimately improving the quality of care and education provided to children in Dodge County.

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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.

Educator: Marie Witzel

A training for youth to learn how to create cover letters and resumes to be successful in applying to scholarships, and jobs

- Dodge county 4-H uses cover letters and resumes for youth to apply for member experience funding support and scholarships. There was not an opportunity for youth to learn that skill especially for the younger members. I am offering a series using the Utah curriculum on Preparing for the World of Work. I have had 3 sessions to date. In February, I had youth attend a zoom session. From the session 100 percent rated the quality of the presentation as amazing, 100% rated how prepared the teacher was at amazing, and 100% rated the teachers ability to teach participants in an engaging way as amazing. Some key points they learned was what makes prior experiences relevant to the job. And in the future they will use this criteria to help create a proper resume.

An opportunity for youth at the Randolph Library for youth to do some fun Valentine crafting.

- AmeriCorps outreach program with a new partner to offer something for youth AmeriCorps member, Molly developed a program with the Randolph Library. The program was done with the Columbia County AmeriCorps member to get creative for Valentine's day. They made ribbon flowers, embroidered bookmarks and Valentine's Day Cards. It was a new partnership with Randolph library this year. 4 youth attended the workshop and created some crafts on a day off from school.