

Monthly Highlights September 2025

Agriculture – Crops

Educator: Will Fulwider

An on-farm project demonstrating the use of winter camelina as a cover crop adapted to drone seeding in Dodge County. This project is in collaboration with Universal Coop of Lebanon.

The goals of this project are:

- Increase cover crop adoption
 - To showcase the cover crop for local farmers as a potential for local farmers that can provide cover crop benefits like reducing soil and nutrient loss over winter, while being easier to kill and less of a potential drag on the subsequent corn crop than rye
 - Demonstrate the effectiveness of drone seeding camelina—the small seed and low rate allows for the drone to be more efficient—and ease of seeding of cover crops during a busy time of year
- Develop/strengthen relationships with ag industry and new farmers
 - Use this project as a starting point and model for future collaborations between Extension and Universal Co-op as well as other co-ops and other potential industry partners to expand the reach of Extension programming
 - Project will work with four farmers with whom Fulwider has not previously worked extensively

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.



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Agriculture - Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

A radio interview for a Fond du Lac local radio station, for farmers and agricultural industry persons, where I took advantage to talk about the ongoing needs assessment and promote the Bilingual Calving Management Practices Workshop which will happen on the 28 and 29 of August.

Dairy Farmers use a variety of sources to get information, including radio. This conversation focused on the upcoming Bilingual Calving Management Practices Workshop. Providing this information in a public media metric allows people who may be underserved or unaware of Extension agriculture programs to learn more about the types of programs offered and allows them to engage in the programs that meet their needs. This improved outreach allows Extension to serve clients that are outside of our normal means of contact.

An article for farmers and farm workers, where we explained the different types of fiber in a dairy diet and how they affect milk production, to help them better understand fiber as a key nutrient, interpret lab reports, and identify nutrition-related issues at the feed bunk, leading to improved overall farm performance.

We created this bilingual article in response to a common knowledge gap observed on dairy farms regarding the nutrients in cow diets and their impact on milk production. Many farmers and

The Dairy Program offers education by holding in-person meetings and live webinars, as well as developing resources such as articles, factsheets, and videos.

Our program is made up of University Specialists and Regional Educators. Specialists perform scientific research based on dairy industry demands and develop practical resources for Wisconsin farm families. Regional Dairy Educators deliver research and resources to farms like yours and connect trusted, unbiased, university-based research to assist the dairy industry in making the livelihood of farming viable in the future.



workers lacked access to clear, practical information on how to interpret fiber values from lab reports and apply that knowledge on the farm. This effort aimed to improve understanding of fiber as a key nutrient, helping farm teams make more informed decisions to support cow health and feed efficiency. We developed a bilingual educational article tailored to both farmers and farm workers, focusing on the role of fiber in dairy cow diets. We ensure technical accuracy and present the information in an accessible format for a wide range of readers. The article explains types of fiber, their impact on milk production, how to read fiber values in lab reports, and simple ways to assess fiber on-farm. Since it is an article its outcome cannot be determined yet but our goal was to bridge the communication gap and provide practical tools that could be immediately applied in daily feeding management.



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Community Development

Educator: Pat Malone

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

Response to Need

To collect additional information on county needs, the Extension educator chose to respond with a series of community economic development listening sessions. These were scheduled throughout the county, typically in the evening. Elected and appointed officials and other community leaders from each of the cities and villages were invited to attend the program that best fit their schedule.

A series of questions around issues related to economic development was asked of the participants.

Outcomes of Effort

Twenty-seven community leaders from throughout Dodge County participated in the program. A summary report was prepared and shared with the county administrator, the oversight committee, and the county board. It will be shared with other potential partners as a marketing tool.

The conversations affirmed housing and workforce as priority issues identified in my earlier needs assessment. In addition paying for infrastructure and downtown development were identified.

I will be using these results in a couple of ways. One will be to inform the plan of work that I am developing to serve the rest of the county. The second way is to inform the priorities of the Conservation/Extension Committee, county agencies, and the full county board.



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Food Security, Healthy Eating, and Healthy Living

Educator: Kimberly Lafler

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 a 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).

FoodWise continues to make a meaningful impact in supporting Dodge County through education and movement. FoodWise provided science-based nutrition related articles to patrons of the Beaver Dam Food Pantry and the Gathering Source. These resources empower individuals and families to make healthier choices both while utilizing pantry services. This can spark small behavior changes that can be used in other areas of their lives that can lead to greater improvements in overall health.

As there is limited availability of no-cost exercise options in Dodge County, FoodWise partners with local agencies to offer free Strong Bodies series to adults and seniors. The eight-week series of classes leads participants proper strength training techniques to improve muscle strength, bone density, balance, and social connections. These all support aging in place and promote a greater sense of wellness and continued independence.

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Human Development & Relationships

Educator: Pattie Carroll

Patricia Carroll and team published a report on a study to better understand the continuing education needs of child care providers in Wisconsin. Results from this study will help agencies who serve this workforce align efforts to provide high-quality continuing education. The goal is to improve the support of the childcare workforce and strengthen their early care and education practices.

Carroll partners with the Greater Watertown Area Health Foundation to coordinate quarterly meetings for early childcare professionals where participants learn about best practices, legislative updates, and licensing changes. The goal of this meeting is to provide a space for early childcare professionals to network with each other about best practices through facilitated dialogue.

Patricia Carroll is collaborating with Dodge County Human Services and Health Department to introduce COMET (Changing Our Mental and Emotional Trajectory) training to Dodge County. This initiative responds to the growing need for mental health support that extends beyond crisis intervention and suicide prevention. Many individuals experience distress, moderate

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.



depression, or anxiety—often undiagnosed—that significantly affects their overall well-being. COMET is designed to fill this gap by equipping community members to recognize and respond to individuals in this “vulnerable space,” thereby helping to prevent escalation into crisis. As part of the foundational work for this initiative, Carroll recently earned certification in Mental Health First Aid and is actively pursuing funding to bring Train-the-Trainer programming to the county.



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Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzell

An impact for Dodge County on the AmeriCorps members in the Extension office to increase partnerships, participation and presence in the county. Total Reach: 100 youth attended programs during the summer.

Extension is often unknown in the county, so the AmeriCorps members offered an opportunity to expand that image. AmeriCorp members reached the county through programming in a variety of locations to elementary youth and STEM programs targeted to middle and high school youth. This was information shared with the communication department.

How have your Americorps members increased partnerships in Dodge County? Any specific examples would be welcome! The AmeriCorps members were able to increase partnerships to 5 libraries and 4 promotion events over the summer. At the county fair alone, they were talking to families which resulted in 10 families expressing an interest in the Dodge County 4-H program. We also had some other interest forms completed that were followed up with at the extension office.

How have your Americorps members increased your capacity as an educator? Again- examples are encouraged. As the only 4-H educator in Dodge County, I would not be able to do the outreach that they were able to do with the other programs that I am responsible for in the county. The STEM program in particular was one that the youth really enjoyed. Even though we didn't have a large number of participants, Izzy had at least 2 youth attend all of her programs which was significant

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.



since they attended over 6 of them this summer.

How have (or will) your Americorps increase enrollment in youth development programs in Dodge County? The AmeriCorps members are able to increase the visibility of youth development programs to additional locations in the county. The youth may not necessarily enroll in 4-H, but they are aware that extension offers programs for youth.

Any other ways that the Molly and Izzy have impacted Dodge County that you'd like for us to know? Molly and Izzy did an amazing job over the summer. I was able to see that first hand as I visited some of their teaching. I also heard from a librarian that having them come to the program not only offers something different for their youth, but also helps the library with outreach programs that they are required to complete. I also saw their impact at county fair as youth came by to say hi after having been involved with a program they offered over the summer.

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