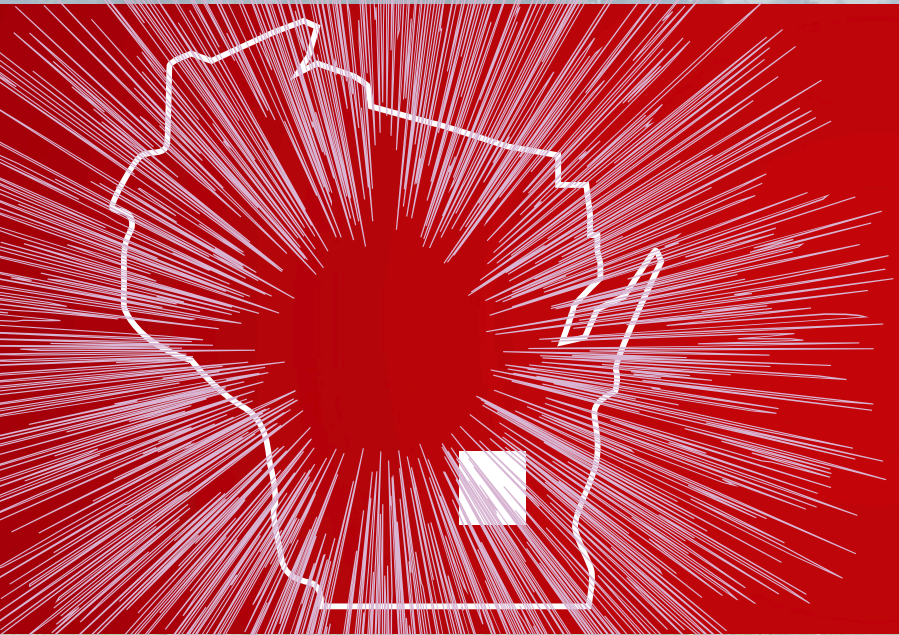




Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DODGE COUNTY

Annual Report



2025

We are:



Promoting healthy relationships:

We support aging-friendly communities, coach parents, and help families integrate technology, mindfulness, and financial awareness into their daily lives.



Supporting Wisconsin's agriculture industry:

Whether on the farm or in the field, we're on the front lines of modern agriculture, helping producers build stronger and more productive food systems.



Encouraging positive youth development:

Our research-based youth enrichment programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to grow into the global leaders of tomorrow.

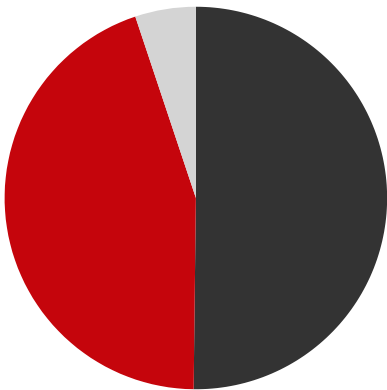


Who We Serve



1644

Direct Educational Contacts



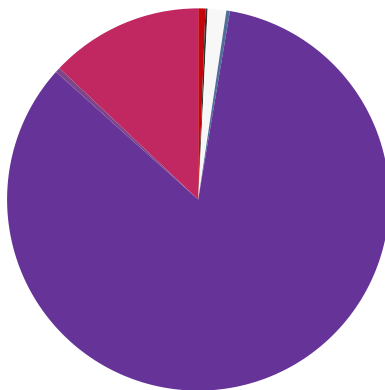
44.7%



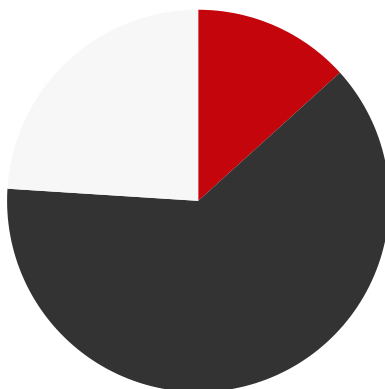
50.2%

5.1%

unidentified /
not provided



- Native American or Alaska Native - .06%
 - Asian - .18%
 - Black or African American - 1.57%
 - Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander - .30%
 - White - 83.98%
 - Two or more - .42%
 - Not Indicated - 12.94%
-



- Hispanic - 13.29%
- Not Hispanic - 62.72%
- Ethnicity Not Indicated - 23.99%

Agriculture – Dairy

Educator: Manuel Peña

Building a Stronger Safety Culture on Wisconsin Farms

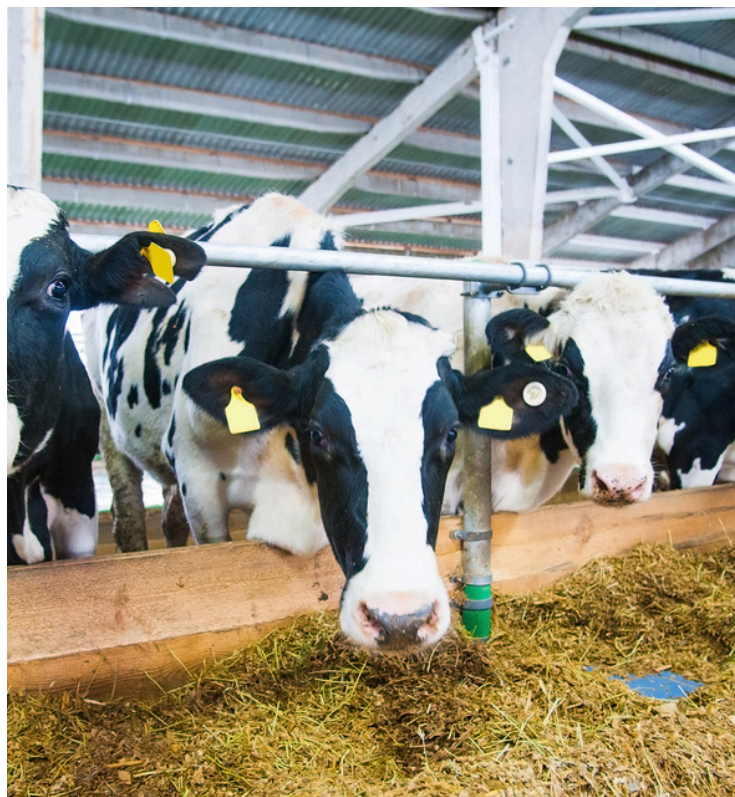
Dairy Educator Manuel Peña helped develop and pilot the bilingual Forward Farm Safety Toolbox, a train-the-trainer program designed to help farm operations, safety consultants, educators, and instructors provide practical, effective agricultural safety training. The program was developed in response to feedback from dairy producers who identified a need for practical, on-farm training that could reduce injuries and accidents while supporting animal performance, worker well-being, and farm profitability.

The toolbox provides an interactive guide and hands-on training materials based on research and adult-learning principles. Rather than relying on traditional presentations, the program uses a 20-40-40 learning model: 20% learning, 40% exploring, and 40% solving. This approach encourages participants to actively engage with real-world safety situations, take ownership of their learning, and identify solutions that can be immediately applied on their farms.

Pilot testing provided an opportunity for farmers and other users to evaluate the training and provide feedback. Participants reported a stronger understanding of workplace risks and identified specific changes they could implement right away, including safer animal-handling practices, improved tractor safety, and clearer

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.



communication protocols among employees. Feedback from the pilot sessions was also used to refine the toolbox and make the training more relevant to a variety of farm conditions.

By providing farms with practical tools and strategies for ongoing safety training, the Forward Farm Safety Toolbox supports long-term behavior change and helps establish safety as an everyday part of farm culture. This work advances efforts to create safer agricultural workplaces, reduce the risk of injury, and promote the well-being of farm employees while supporting the success and sustainability of Wisconsin's dairy industry.

Agriculture – Crops

Educator: Will Fulwider

Dodge County Research Farm Advances Local Agricultural Research

The Dodge County Research Farm continued to take shape this year as a collaborative effort to bring locally relevant agricultural research and demonstration opportunities to producers. Crops Educator Will Fulwider worked with Andrew Johnson and UW specialists to further refine the farm's research plan and establish baseline soil sampling protocols.

The research plan compares three management approaches—low-input, UW-recommended, and high-input—within the same fields using approximately 80-foot-wide strips. Research variables include fertility, nitrogen, sulfur, fungicide use, and weed management. Farm management and soil data will be digitally tracked to evaluate both agronomic performance and economic outcomes. A key question for producers is whether conservation practices, including no-till, can maintain productivity while also protecting the bottom line.

A small soil health demonstration field was also selected near the highway. This site will explore expanded crop rotations and cover crops, with potential future integration of livestock. Soil sampling will establish baseline conditions and allow changes in soil health to be tracked over time.

The Agriculture – Crops Program supports Dodge County farmers through applied research, educational programs, demonstrations, and practical resources. The program connects producers with current research and innovative management practices related to crop production, soil health, conservation, and emerging agricultural issues. By bringing research and education directly to local farms, we help producers make informed decisions, improve productivity and profitability, and build resilient agricultural systems for the future.



The Dodge County Research Farm Field Day on July 29 brought nearly 70 farmers, agribusiness professionals, conservation partners, and community members to the Airport Farm in Juneau. Participants learned about the planned research trials, cover crop and soil health practices, and opportunities to integrate grazing into cropland. The strong turnout demonstrated significant local interest in research that addresses real-world production and economic questions under Dodge County growing conditions. The project continues to strengthen collaboration among producers, Extension, conservation organizations, and agricultural partners.

Human Development & Relationships

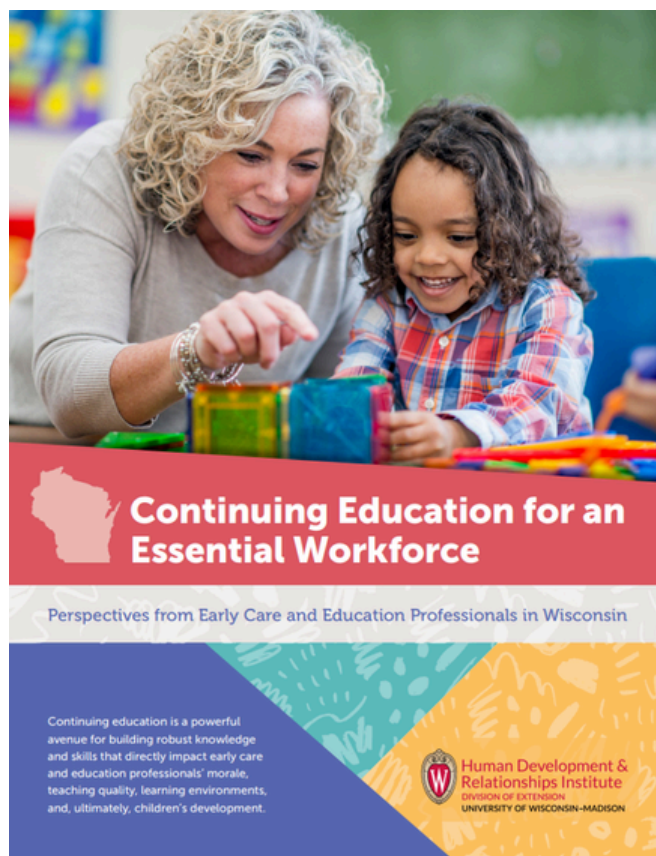
Educator: Pattie Carroll

Strengthening Families and Supporting Early Childhood Professionals

Human Development & Relationships Educator Pattie Carroll advanced family well-being and early childhood education through statewide collaboration and responsive local programming. Carroll contributed to Continuing Education for an Essential Workforce: Perspectives from Early Care and Education Professionals in Wisconsin, a statewide report examining the continuing education needs of Wisconsin's early care and education (ECE) workforce. She helped analyze focus group data from 32 ECE professionals across 12 counties and co-wrote sections addressing foundational competencies, family engagement, and culturally responsive practices. The report will help inform future professional development and support for Wisconsin's ECE workforce.

Carroll also connected this statewide work to Dodge County priorities identified through the 2025 Community Needs Forum, which focused on family well-being, workforce support, and community connection. She authored an issue brief on local childcare needs to support future planning and dialogue around childcare solutions.

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.



Locally, Carroll partnered with the Beaver Dam Unified School District to offer monthly "Let's Talk Parenting" sessions, providing parents with practical strategies related to discipline, routines, media use, and family connection. She also partnered with Dodge County Human Resources to provide Thrive @ Work financial wellness lunch-and-learns, averaging 17 participants per session, while recorded content extended the program's reach.

Together, these efforts demonstrate Extension's role in turning community needs and research into practical resources that strengthen families, support childcare professionals, and promote well-being throughout Dodge County.

Positive Youth Development

Educator: Marie Witzel

Sparks Impact on Dodge County 4-H

To develop the Spark Your Sparks lesson, our team grounded its work in research from the Search Institute, which defines Sparks as the interests and passions that give youth purpose and contribute to positive development. Research shows that youth who identify and cultivate their Sparks, with support from caring adults, experience enhanced well-being, increased motivation, stronger relationships, and improved academic performance. Using this research foundation, the team adapted, with permission, a classroom-based lesson plan into a structured, activity-based lesson for 4-H programs. Learning experiences were designed to meet the needs of youth with a variety of developmental, cognitive, and physical abilities. A support structure was also created to train older youth and adults as Sparks Champions, gather Sparks data statewide, and develop dashboards to visualize trends over time. The draft lesson was shared with 78 educators during a statewide Positive Youth Development Zoom session, where feedback was gathered and pilot counties were identified.

In Dodge County, Sparks programming helped youth identify and share the interests, talents, and passions that bring them joy and purpose. Through

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.



lessons facilitated with the Juneau Victorians and River Oaks 4-H Clubs, 64 youth explored interests in outdoor education, agriculture, sports, STEM, creative expression, family relationships, and well-being. The information gathered will help guide Dodge County 4-H programming and project development for the 2026-2027 program year.

The impact of Sparks extended to the Dodge County Fair, where youth shared their Sparks through projects including shooting sports, dogs, swine, sheep, poultry, LEGO, caviar, robotics, and rabbits. One especially meaningful example involved an older 4-H member with learning challenges who confidently taught visitors about caviar, using fur samples to explain differences in coat texture and care. Her ability to engage youth and adults, answer questions, and demonstrate expertise highlighted how Sparks help young people build confidence, discover their strengths, and shine as leaders in their community.



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The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.