



## Agriculture

Jerry Clark | *Regional Crops & Soils Educator*



Sign up to receive the Extension in the Valley agriculture and horticulture e-newsletter [HERE](#).

A seminar for agricultural finance lenders where participants learned about emerging agricultural economic issues to improve lending decisions. The goal of the program is to provide university-based research, information, and market analysis for regional financial leaders to make informed decisions. ( Brenda Boetel, Kelly Wilfert, Leonard Polzin, Ryan Sterry)

A panel discussion for educators, agronomy industry and agency professionals where attendees learned about the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) to increase awareness of nitrogen management results and involvement in the program. The goal of the presentation as a panelist was to discuss experience with the program as an extension educator and fiscal agent. (Christine Clark, Jordan Kampa, Joshua Kamps, Lindsey Rushford, Liz Gartman, Scott Reuss)

Planning for a four session Focus on Forage webinar series for forage growers and agriculture consultants in collaboration with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the US Dairy Forage Research Center. The goal is to provide research based forage management solutions to improve forage quality and meet producer goals. (Liz Gartman, Anastasia Kurth, Damon Smith, Daniel Marzu, Harkirat Kaur, Jordyn Sattler, Joshua Kamps, Kevin Jarek, Mark Renz, Marta Moura Kohmann, Megan Sankey, Melissa Ohlrich, Scott Newell, Scott Reuss)

### Spotlight

*Extension UW-Madison regional educators coordinated an on-farm research project through the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) to investigate the effect of manure application and commercial nitrogen application rates on corn silage and grain yields. The Wisconsin Agribusiness Association hosted a panel discussion to present farmer, industry, and extension experience with involvement in the NOPP. Extension was invited to participate in the panel discussion to present their experience in the program. One hundred-six agronomy professionals attended a panel discussion on the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program: Highlights of On-Farm Research. Panel members discussed their experience with involvement in the NOPP. Panel members included Monica Schauer and Jerry Clark, UW-Madison; Jason Rowe, Farmer-led Watershed; Ted Hoffman, InDepth Agronomy, and Susan Mockert, Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection. Evaluation information was not available and will be shared when available.*



**Ryan Sterry** | Regional Livestock Educator



Thinking About Farm Succession workshop for farmers where participants learned about what happens if they don't do any estate planning and how to start the conversation with their families about estate planning. (Joy Kirkpatrick, Jerry Clark, Kelly Wilfert, Kristin Krokowski)

Planning for an artificial insemination course for dairy and beef producers. The goal is to teach farmers how to breed their cattle, so that they are not dependent on an AI technician. (Heather Schlessler and Sandy Stuttgen)

Planning for a calving management course for dairy and beef farm owners and workers. The goal is to teach farm owners and workers to recognize signs of stress during calving and to know when assistance is needed and how to assist with the delivery of the calf, so that more live calves can be born. (Heather Schlessler, Alison Pfau, Sandy Stuttgen)

Planning for a dairy heifer reproduction data collection and survey project in collaboration with UW-Madison Department of Animal and Dairy Science faculty and graduate students. The goal is to assess current management practices and identify areas for improvement. Raising replacement dairy heifers is a significant and rising cost to dairy farms, and poor reproductive performance only adds to rearing costs. (Aerica Bjurstrom, Angie Ulness, Heather Schlessler, Jackie Mccarville, Paul Fricke)

### **PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:**

*Wisconsin agriculture is influenced by domestic and global commodity trading markets and industry trends. Financial management and lending is a major component of overall farm and agriculture business stability. Informing banking and lending institutions about agricultural trends and markets are critical to farm and rural community stability. The annual Western WI Agricultural Lender Seminar provided a venue for agricultural lending professionals to increase awareness of economic trends affecting production agriculture. Speakers and topics included, 2025 Dairy and Policy Outlook, Leonard Polzin, Dairy Market and Policy Outreach Specialist Extension UW-Madison, Consideration for Solar Energy Contracts; Kelly Wilfert, Agriculture Law Outreach Specialist, Extension UW-Madison; Grain Market Outlook, Dr. Brenda Boetel, Commodity Market Specialist, Extension UW-River Falls; Livestock Market Outlook, Dr. Darrell Peel, Livestock Economist, Oklahoma State University; and Leadership Development, Hank Wagner, Dairy Farmer. Ninety-three lenders and agricultural professionals attended the seminar. A Qualtrics evaluation was utilized during and post meeting. On a seven-point Likert Scale with 0 indicating "not useful" and 7 indicating "extremely useful", all attendees rated the usefulness of the program at 5 or above. Participants*



indicated 12.5% would share the information with 51 to 100 others while 69% indicated they would share the information with 6-20 others. ( Collaborated with Jerry Clark)

## Horticulture

**Margaret Murphy** | *Regional Horticulture Educator*

*Extension in the Valley agriculture and horticulture e-newsletter, view newsletters [HERE](#).*



*Collaborating with Affinity House and FoodWise to plant gardens at Affinity House and teach several garden lessons*

*Continue to plan and develop programs for 2025 which includes co-chairing a workgroup addressing environmental pollution issues within horticulture and incorporating adaptive gardening strategies in gardening*

*Continue to provide timely garden and landscape articles for the Extension in the Valley, a monthly newsletter that focuses on Agriculture and Horticulture news. January's issue includes guidance on poinsettia care and upcoming programs and presentations. For more garden articles, visit [Seasonal Gardening Articles](#).*

*Participating in the UW Madison Plain Language Certificate course to hone my communication skills.*

## Community Development

**Garret Zastoupil** | *Regional Community & Leadership Development Educator*



*Planning for the launch of the Child Care Action Team with co-chair Becky Albright forHealth Dunn Right. This action team is new and based on changing priorities identified on the Dunn County Community Health Needs Assessment. The goal is to bring together relevant partners to discuss and take action to increase the affordability, accessibility, and quality of childcare in Dunn County.*

*Planning and facilitating a series of meetings focused on emergency medical services (EMS) in Dunn County to inform local officials of funding opportunities from the Wisconsin Department of Administration and build capacity for Dunn County to ensure reliable and sustainable EMS services for all county Residents.*

### *Spotlight*

*On January 21, 2024, HSHS Hospital Sisters announced the closing of major hospitals in Eau Claire and Chippewa Falls, and Prevea simultaneously announced the closing on 19 West Central Wisconsin clinics.*



*This placed nearly 1,400 high paying jobs at risk, along with the local tax base and local economic development efforts in Wisconsin's second fastest growing region of the state. U.W.-Madison Extension Local Government Education Program staff were immediately contacted to assist in an effort to create new healthcare access in the region. U.W.-Madison Extension staff connected local business and civic leaders with a financial consulting firm, helped to obtain an initial cooperative development grant from WEDC, helped create a Wisconsin Statutes Chapter 193 cooperative by writing draft articles and bylaws, helped vet and train cooperative board members, assisted in apply for IRS Section 501(c)(3) charitable status, assisted in reviewing fundraising agreements, co-led efforts to obtain hospital/clinic construction and operational financing, educated state healthcare policymakers and acted as liaison with local units of government across 15 counties in West Central Wisconsin. Extension staff attend weekly board meetings and the above efforts are ongoing. With Extension's substantial assistance, the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative (CVHC) was formed in April of 2024. The CVHC Board of Directors is meeting weekly; CVHC financial, legal and public relations consultants are working with Extension staff on a variety of tasks, including meeting with local units of government across 15 counties, working with lenders and federal agencies to obtain construction and operational financing, working with federal agencies and cooperative organizations to obtain grant funding to form the necessary equity base, and working with CVHC board members on setting up a fundraising program.*

## Health and Well-Being

**Sandy Tarter**

FoodWise Coordinator



**Joy Weisner**

FoodWise Educator



**Hillarie Roth**

FoodWise Educator



A series of virtual strength training sessions (StrongBodies) for adults in the community, where participants engage in regular, progressive strength training and health education to improve their physical and mental health, and enhance social connectedness. To date there are 29 Dunn County residents registered for this January - April series.

Collaboration with the Menomonie Farmers Market Board. This effort will support their development as a 501c3 entity and advance the restart of Market Match. The goal is to strengthen relationships with all vendors, support understanding within Hmong vendors, and build a foundational Market Match program so FoodShare families can gain added value to their market purchases. FoodWise will support their



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spring vendor meeting as needed.

Connection with Indianhead Enterprises for relationship building and to explore the potential of future programming.

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## Human Development and Relationships

Luisa Gerasimo | *Human Development and Relationships Educator*



A state-wide monthly topic-specific series, **Resilient Co-Parenting**, for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce, or changes in the custody of their children, where they learn skills to improve communication and problem-solving, support children emotionally, and keep kids out of the middle of conflict. This series is designed to improve understanding of positive parenting practices that are useful during stress, while providing social connection for parents experiencing family transitions. (In conjunction with Hannah Zellmer,

Adam Trunzo, Amanda Griswold, Beverly Doll, Heidi Ungrodt, Mary Campbell Wood, Missy Bablick, Pamela Wedig-Kirsch, Renee Koenig, Todd Wenzel, Tracy Henegar)

A co-parenting class, **Parents Forever**, for parents and caregivers experiencing separation, divorce or changes in the custody of their children, where they learned skills to prioritize the parent-child relationship and better communicate with their co-parent. This program is designed to increase child well-being and reduce parental conflict during family transitions.

**Making Reading Memories** is a program for families involved in the justice system where parents in jail are video recorded reading storybooks, which are then shared with their children at home. The goal is to reduce the trauma of separation, strengthen family relationships and at the same time increase children's exposure to books and reading.

**Read and Connect**, is a requirement for those who wish to participate in Making Reading Memories. The goal is to have parents learn the importance of reading aloud to children and ways to engage their child through books. This program helps parents strengthen the parent-child bond and build children's early literacy skills, which are an important foundation for success in school and life.

I serve on a state-wide team to promote and improve the **Just In Time Parenting newsletter**. This free monthly newsletter for pre-birth up to 5 years old children is designed for parents, caregivers, childcare professionals, and professionals who are serving families. The no-ad format allows participants to learn evidence-based parenting strategies and child development information to support positive family dynamics and child well-being. Through this effort, participants gain practical tools to strengthen their





parenting skills and promote healthy childhood development, leading to a positive impact on family resilience and child success. We will soon release recorded short format versions in English, Spanish and Hmong. (Amanda Griswold, Alicia Utke-Becher, Kula Yang)

## Spotlight

**REAL COLORS:** *The department heads contacted me to see if I would facilitate a 3 hour Real Colors workshop. They have had some staffing changes and other departments recommended Real Colors. Working with the department heads I was able to offer my services and set up a morning workshop for all 15 employees. The group participated well and were able to understand the material as shown in the break out sessions. Laughter and aha moments were shared. And, as the testimonial provided points out, the staff has so far responded in a positive way. This workshop has been shown to improve communication and create a more rewarding climate in work and personal environments.*

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## Positive Youth Development

Zachary Rozmiarek | 4-H Program Educator



The February Clover Courier can be viewed [HERE](#).

The Area 6 4-H educators have begun planning for Art U 2025. This program is a collaboration between Area 6 4-H, UW-Stout Art Education Department, and Arts Integration Menomonie. To prepare we have met with the professor at UW-Stout to develop this year's program. We have decided on the dates, times, and began looking at the types of activities that will be offered. We have also begun promoting the event through newsletters, facebook, and a press release that has been picked up by four local news outlets. (In collaboration with Jordan Blue and Rachel Hart-Brinson)

A leadership and parliamentary procedure training was held for two clubs in Dunn County. The club members started out by completing a team building activity which illustrated the importance of having rules. They then learned how to make motions during a meeting by voting on what items to add to trail mix.

Planning for a project learning day, Clover University, for youth in grades 6th-13th in collaboration with volunteers and Area 6 4-H staff. The goal is to provide hands-on learning experiences in various project areas, where participants will gain new skills and knowledge. Through this event, youth will develop practical abilities, foster a love for project learning, and build confidence in their capabilities, contributing to their overall personal growth and future success. (Partnered with Jordan Blue, Amber Gilles, and Rachel Hart-Brinson)

Planning has begun for the 2025 Battle of the Clubs. This event is an important tradition in Dunn County. The Youth Activities Council members help put on the event by leading the challenges for the clubs to



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compete in. We have met to set a date, time and location. We have also briefly discussed the activities and how the event will be funded.

Planning has begun for a series of events to take place during Spring Break. We will be offering three half day sessions. We are planning the event in such a way that every school district in the County will have a break on at least one of the three days. The activities will range from outdoor skills, crafts, and team building exercises.

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## Value Added Programming

*Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire Counties*

A one-day workshop for community broadband leaders, economic development organizations, public and private permitting agencies, and internet service providers, where participants learned about broadband permitting requirements, engagement and endorsement of Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) projects, and engaged in peer learning through case studies so they can build effective public-private partnerships that meet their community's broadband needs, increasing economic opportunity and quality of life for all community members. (John Parrish, Brittany Beyer, Christopher Stark, Gail Huycke, Jessica Beckendorf, Kristen Bruder)

A coaching program for families and individuals, where participants learn how to create financial goals and gain money management skills. The goal of this program is to enable participants to prepare for and take charge of household financial situations that occur due to changes in income or unforeseen hardships. (Jeanne Walsh)

A study to better understand the geology of part of southwestern Dunn County. Results from this study will help the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and county officials make informed land and water use decisions. (Eric Stewart, Anna Fehling, Esther Stewart)

Provide a leadership role in the founding and operation of the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative. Extension is working closely with a cooperative board of local civic and business leaders to move forward on constructing a new hospital and related clinics. The goal of the cooperative is to create renewed healthcare access in a region adversely impacted by the recent closure of two closed hospitals and 19 clinics, to preserve nearly 1,400 high paying jobs, and to support local economic development efforts and to support the local tax base. (Bill Oemichen, Karl Green, Kristen Bruder)



## Area Extension Director

**Kristen Bruder** | *Area Extension Director – Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire Counties*



Please reach out with questions and ideas. The role of the AED is much like the department head in the county. Below is a brief overview of the role of AEDs: Extension fully invests in Area Extension Directors (AEDs) who oversee an area. These administrative positions are responsible for partnership management, staff development, financial management and program coordination.

Through the many interactions the AED has with county partners and local educators, the AED develops a solid understanding of the local needs and county priorities and helps to align Extension educational programs to ensure the programs address county needs. Educators also communicate local needs to their programmatic Institutes which collectively identify opportunities to address statewide needs.

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### Upcoming events [Event Calendar – Extension](#)

Raising a Thinking Child: Tuesdays March 11- April 15, 9:00 am – 10:15 am or 6:00 pm – 7:15 pm, [Register Here](#)