



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DUNN COUNTY



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

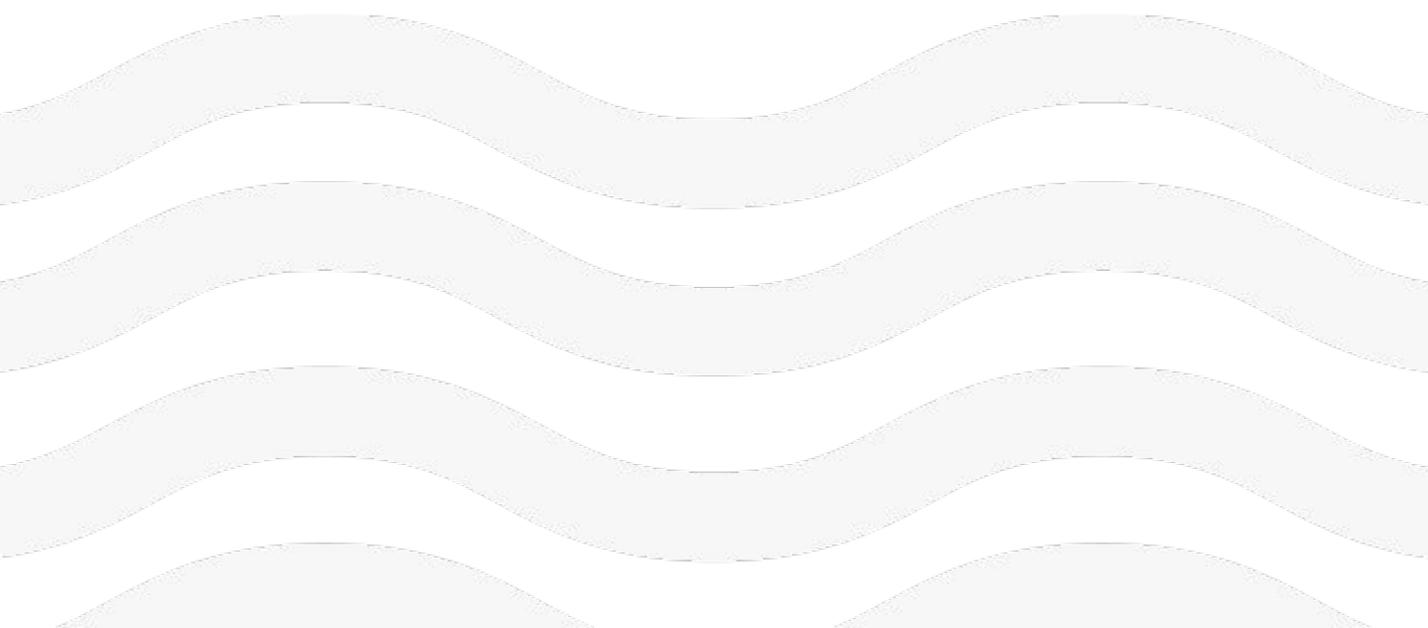


Table of Contents

Extension 3

Administrative..... 4

Institutes 5

Agriculture 6

Horticulture 9

Food Wise 11

Human Development & Relationships 13

Wisconsin 4-H 15

Community Development 17

Thank you to the 2024 Community Resources & Tourism Committee for providing oversight for Extension:

Bob Bauer – Chair, Monica Berrier– Vice Chair, Spencer Berndt, Larry Bjork,& Thomas Quinn

Thank you for your support and guidance.

University of Wisconsin–Madison Extension Dunn County

3001 US Hwy 12 E | Suite 216 | Menomonie, WI 54751
715-232-1636 | [Dunn.Extension.Wisc.Edu](mailto:info@extension.wisc.edu) | info@extension.wisc.edu



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

UW-Madison Extension's outreach creates key connection points for families, farms, businesses, nonprofit organizations, government, and more. We support local volunteers and leaders to take action and serve as role models in their communities, and we make sure Wisconsinites have the latest research, best practices, and educational opportunities.



Learn more at
extension.wisc.edu





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

"I am so proud to be part of a team that genuinely cares about the people they serve and brings passion and dedication to their work every day. Their commitment continues to make Dunn County an incredible place to live and work."

Over the past year, Extension has continued to evolve to better serve the needs of Dunn County. We have shifted our emphasis from Dairy to Livestock, ensuring broader support for farmers and producers across multiple species. Additionally, our focus has transitioned from Food Systems to Community Development, allowing us to better address local economic growth, leadership development, and civic engagement. Our educators and staff have worked tirelessly to build partnerships, provide research-based programming, and support initiatives that strengthen our community. Through collaboration and innovation, Extension remains committed to making a lasting impact in Dunn County.

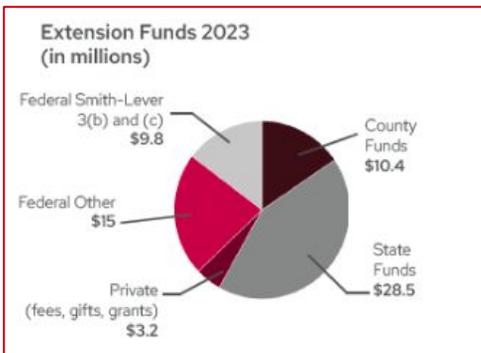
Extension fully invests in Area Extension Directors (AEDs), who serve as key administrators for our county-based programming. AEDs manage partnerships, support staff development, handle financial management, and coordinate programs throughout their designated areas. By regularly engaging with county partners and local educators, AEDs build strong relationships and gain a thorough understanding of local needs and county priorities. They help ensure that Extension's educational programs closely match the community's goals and address specific local challenges.

Leveraging Funding for Greater Impact

Extension's partnership with counties ensures impactful, research-based programming for local communities. By strategically combining county investments with state, federal, and grant funding, we amplify resources to expand education, support economic development, and address local needs.

The graph highlights how Extension maximizes funding to deliver greater value, align with county priorities, and drive measurable impact. Together, we can strengthen communities by making the most of available resources.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established the Cooperative Extension Service. It provides federal funds for Cooperative Extension activities through USDA. The act requires that states provide a 100 percent match from non-federal resources. Wisconsin provides a greater match: a \$3.95 state, county, and tribal funding leverage per \$1 of Smith-Lever funding.



UW-Madison Extension: By the Numbers

Extension is funded through Smith-Lever dollars, which are matched with state and county/tribal funds. Each FY 2023 dollar received under the Smith-Lever 3(b) and (c) appropriation was leveraged by:

\$2.90 in state funding
+ \$1.05 in county/tribal funding
= \$3.95 state and county leverage

CONTACT:

Karl Martin, Dean and Director | UW-Madison Extension
608-263-2775 | karl.martin@wisc.edu



Deanna Wiersgalla
Community Outreach and
Office Operations Associate

I joined Extension Dunn County as the Community Outreach and Office Operations Associate at the very end of 2024 and feel very fortunate to be part of such an amazing team. I support the Extension educators in their programming, and also run the daily operations of the office – there is never a dull moment! A large part of my job consists of connecting the citizens of Dunn County with all the information, research, and resources that Extension has to offer. Nothing brings me more joy than helping others, and this job allows me that opportunity!

UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES *with* THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

Agriculture & Horticulture >>

Our network of researchers, outreach specialists, and local educators are on the leading edge of creating practical solutions for livestock and crop production in addition to farm and labor management. We provide customized guidance, business planning assistance, and industry knowledge for what today's agricultural operations are facing.

Community & Economic Development >>

Businesses, governments, and organizations succeed through development from Extension educators and specialists. We provide education for elected officials to understand their roles and responsibilities in helping communities thrive. We offer businesses the direct technical assistance and connection to support structures they need to help them succeed. Our rural entrepreneurship program identifies ways for businesses to overcome challenges and take advantage of unique opportunities.

Health & Well-Being >>

We're supporting positive change for families through physical and mental health programs in addition to structural improvements needed to make the healthy choice the easy one. Our physical fitness classes and mental health training equips people with the tools they need to lead healthy, active lives. We provide public health resources and tools for community action. We provide guidance on systems changes for food security and food access.

Human Development and Relationships >>

Reinforcing family connections, financial knowledge, and strong relationships is at the heart of Extension's programming. We support learning and emotional bonding by building literacy skills in justice-involved families. We guide community and individual development across lifespans. We teach financial security through rent planning and budget management.

Positive Youth Development & 4-H >>

Community-led 4-H programs deliver quality activities and leadership opportunities that are leading to engaged, energized, and informed young people across the state. 4-H is a movement – in Wisconsin, 98% of our 4-H members are inspired to make positive changes in their communities.

Natural Resources & Conservation - Value Added State Funded Programs >>

We work at the crossroads of communities, natural resources, and agriculture to protect our environmental assets and guide resource management. We support individual and regional water-well testing, along with education to address safe drinking water. We educate farmers, businesses, and communities on safe practices to ensure access to plentiful, sustainably managed sources of food, water, and energy.



Agriculture

Supporting Livestock



The University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Livestock Program strengthens the industry through statewide education and research. The program has educators and campus-based specialists focused on the following areas: beef cattle, poultry, sheep and goats, swine, and meat science.

The Landscape

304 farms with 5,529 beef cows that have calved (breeding stock) in Dunn County

97%
Percent
Family Farms
(2022 Census of Ag)

67,781 total head of cattle
(beef and dairy cattle all ages)

\$213,747,000 in total ag sales from milk, livestock and poultry products
(2022 Census of Ag)

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. Early relationship building includes Chippewa Valley Technical College, Western Wisconsin Agricultural Lenders, Wisconsin Farmers Union, and local Farm Bureau chapters.



Ryan Sterry
Regional Livestock Educator

I am the regional Livestock Educator for Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. I have served as an Extension educator since 2006, and transitioned roles to Regional Livestock Educator for Area 6 in late 2024. I enjoy the variety the job brings, and finding ways to take research based information and make it applicable to our area farms. I am excited to learn more about and serve our producers in the Chippewa Valley.



Agriculture

Supporting Crops and Soils



The Division of Extension UW-Madison Crops and Soils program connects regional educators and statewide specialists to focus on issues and challenges facing today's field, vegetable, fruit, and emerging crop producer. The Crops and Soils Program focuses on Forage and Grain Production and Management, Emerging Crops, Grazing, Pest Management, Soils, Nutrient Management, and Economics of Crop Production.

The Landscape

174,000

Acres of corn and soybeans planted in 2024

372,774

Acres in farmland

14%

Land under irrigation

\$381.3

Million dollars of market product sold

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. Dunn County Demo Farm Committee, FFA Chapters, Chippewa Valley Forage Council, Western Wisconsin Agricultural Lenders, Wisconsin Farmers Union, Dunn County Farm Bureau, Land and Water Conservation Department, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Mayo Clinic Health System Community Action Board, Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Community Impacts In 2024

A part of the Crops and Soils program that brings additional value to the area is localized, on-farm research. Ten different on-farm research projects were conducted in 2024. Grant funding drives these projects as over \$238,000 were secured to implement research projects. Research projects included nitrogen rate applications, spring barley variety and fertility rate trials, winter barley variety and cropping system trials, alfalfa-interseeding with corn silage, and industrial hemp planting date, variety, and nitrogen rate trials. All of these projects serve as a backdrop for educational workshops and field days held throughout the area.



Agriculture

Dunn County Demonstration Farm

The Dunn County Demonstration Farm is a partnership between Dunn County, Land and Water Conservation Division, Chippewa Valley Technical College, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Division of Extension UW-Madison. In 2024, an Adaptive Nitrogen Management research project was implemented on the demonstration farm. This research attempted to address the challenges to questions surrounding selection of N fertilizer rate, use of pre-plant nitrate and pre-sidedress nitrate tests, crediting nitrogen from manure and other on-farm nutrient sources, and how best to use soil health nutrient tools to improve sustainability of nitrogen management practices. Nitrogen rates applied were 0, 40, 80, 120, 160, and 200 (preplant and sidedress) pounds per acre. Field plots were sampled for pre-plant nitrate soil tests. Yields were collected and compared to nitrogen rates applied within the replicated plots. A field day was held where forty-five participants attended the field day. A post-event evaluation indicated 95% of participants increased their knowledge about nitrogen application and management.

Farm Pulse: Crop Insurance and Grain Marketing

The Farm Pulse: Crop Insurance and Grain Marketing hybrid course updated and adapted grain marketing curriculum and local data into a format for use in-person, as stand-alone educational videos, online articles, webinars and an online course. Farm Pulse uses numerous interactive teaching methods for participants to apply risk management, grain marketing, and crop insurance concepts with case farms and their own farm business. Farmers enrolled in an online course to build their knowledge of evaluating risk management, calculating cost of production, crop insurance products, and production and price risk management tools for grain marketing. Farmers attending in-person follow-up meetings to reinforce online learning.

Manure and Nutrient Management

Manure applicator training sessions were held for commercial manure applicators and farmers applying their own manure. The objective of the trainings were to provide training on safe manure handling and application practices. Topics covered during the training include dragline safety, rapid transfer safety, road safety, manure gas safety, manure regulations and application, spill response, CAFO regulations, pump and pressure safety, equipment calibration, and public relations. Participants received a certificate of completion at the end of the course. A new Division of Extension Manure Application Workbook 2024 and corresponding presentation materials were created to assist with training delivery. Training sessions were held in Colfax, Barron, and at various statewide locations. Over 350 applicators attend these sessions statewide.



Jerry Clark
Regional Crops &
Soils Educator

I'm the regional Crops and Soils Educator for Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. I have served as an educator in Extension since 1998 and continue to enjoy the opportunities and challenges that come with serving the agricultural community. I find the variety of tasks most rewarding such as on-farm research, working collaboratively, helping individuals to improve their lives.



Horticulture

Supporting Lawns, Gardens & Landscapes

Horticulture is the connection between people and plants. It supports environmental stewardship, human wellness, and the growing of local food. The program focuses on strategies to mitigate environmental challenges such as pollinator decline and environmental pollution. It offers education on how to grow your own produce to help reduce food costs and aid in nutrition, communicates the physical, mental and social wellness benefits gardening provides, and encourages people of all ages to incorporate gardening into their lifestyle even when space or mobility is limited.



The Landscape

402

Lawn, landscape and gardening questions responded to regionally

90%

Positive rating from end of season survey of regional horticulture advising service

63%

End of season survey respondents who changed or adopted new practices based on guidance received; 51% shared what they learned with others

57

Outreach events, programs and presentations participated in or offered regionally

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin throughout urban and rural communities to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work. In Dunn County, the horticulture program partnered with several organizations and individuals to offer garden-based educational programs, including Dunn County Facilities and Parks Department, Dunn County Master Gardener Association, University of Wisconsin-Stout, and Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley-Menomonie Center.

Community Impacts In 2024

According to our end of season survey, the top answers for specific actions taken or changes made in response to the information individuals received from the regional horticulture program included:

- I used the UW or other credible resources that were provided
- I shared what I learned with others
- I became more aware of environmental concerns
- I planted for better fit for the site
- I used non-chemical methods to control plant pests/diseases
- I increased areas that can be used for pollinator food, nesting and shelter in my outdoor growing spaces



Horticulture

Gardening with the Boys & Girls Club, Year 3

In 2024, we expanded our program in two ways: we included monthly winter classes and during the regular summer session, we included programs with youth from the Menomonie Middle School. Middle schoolers learned the basics of raised bed vegetable gardening together with how pollinators play a vital role in our gardens. The 2nd and 4th graders enjoyed a variety of garden-based activities while learning about cultural connections to many commonly grown garden plants.



“Extension in the Valley” Newsletter

To increase outreach to the public, I contribute to a tri-county monthly newsletter that focuses on agriculture and horticulture news. My effort is designed to keep participants connected to seasonal gardening topics. Engagement can be on multiple levels such as providing information through garden articles or fact sheets, by inviting people to events and inviting people to connect with their county extension office with landscape and garden questions. Current distribution is 655.

Lawn, Landscape & Garden Questions



The regional horticulture program strives to provide expert service that is efficient and beneficial. Here is what people are saying about assistance on common topics of disease, plant selection and lawn concerns.

Fungal issues with lilacs:

- Margaret’s responses were thoroughly researched and answered my questions. She also followed up our phone conversation by sending me an extension brochure about lilac diseases via email
- I appreciate having the extension office to reach out to when I have concerns

Fairy rings on the lawn: Thank you so much for the information! I'm relieved as we were fearful it would be harmful to our beautiful maple tree nearby!

Guidance on plant selection:

- your prompt response and recommendations! I'm sharing this with our Condo Board. We have many trees, all 20 plus years old, so will consider what may be best follow-up.
- pollinator friendly and controls erosion: Thanks so much, This (information) is very helpful and just what we needed.



Margaret Murphy
Horticulture Educator

As Horticulture Educator, I get the perks of cooperative programming with community partners, collaborative work with Extension colleagues regional and statewide, great professional development opportunities and a sense of accomplishment and joy in teaching about the wonders of plants and gardening.

I truly appreciate your support of my program area and welcome your input or questions.



FoodWise

Supporting Healthy Choices & Healthy Lives



FoodWise in Dunn County is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed). With local strengths, we support healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents experiencing limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels.



The Dunn County Landscape

Whether people are healthy or not is affected by systems, policies, and environmental factors.

42%
of children in schools were eligible for free or reduced price meals

9.2%
of county residents (6,211) use SNAP benefits to purchase food for themselves and their families.*

^County Health Rankings
* WI Dept of Administration and WI Dept of Health Services

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin throughout urban and rural communities to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work. In Chippewa County, FoodWise partners with schools, after-school programs, senior housing, Public Health, early child care programs, and food pantries to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.



Community Impacts In 2024

- Engaged with 273 learners for 1432 direct educational contacts around nutrition education topics in a variety of settings, including Menomonie Head Start, River Heights and Downsville Elementary schools, Boys and Girls Club, WIC and Northwest Journey.
- Partnered with River Heights to expand the Harvest of the Month campaign, reaching students, parents & caregivers with messages in English & Spanish to promote eating Wisconsin-grown fruits & vegetables.
- Supported EBT program at the Menomonie Farmers Market. This gives community members with limited income access to use their FoodShare dollars when purchasing local food.



Inspiring Collaborations

FoodWise helps WIC and Head Start families learn tips to stretch their food dollars and raise healthy eaters!

We like to start off youth at an early age learning about healthy habits and introduce them to multiple fruits and vegetables. We share stories with multicultural characters and foods along with engaging youth in activities that teach colors, names of fruits and vegetables, and include multiple tastings with positive encouragement.

Guardians are engaged in conversations that get to the root of the issues they face in feeding their families. Parents learn how to save money with menu planning, shopping strategies, and proper storage to reduce food waste. Additionally, parents share experiences and challenges. It is great to see parents supporting each other and celebrating successes.

Multi-Level Program Efforts

FoodWise has been a long time partner with Menomonie Boys and Girls Club. In summer 2024, a 5-lesson series reached 79 elementary youth from 2nd - 5th grades and 10 middle school students in collaboration with Margaret Murphy, Horticulture Educator. Youth engaged in activities around learning the importance of a balanced way of eating that includes adequate fruits and vegetables. Youth were offered multiple fresh tastes! Staff loved the lessons and shared what they noticed from students:

- "Students were completely invested in these lessons...a fun instructor"
- "Members love the program", "They are more knowledgeable about foods"
- "After the lessons, members talk more about healthy alternatives"
- "Students love doing taste tests and seeing what food was brought in"
- "The hands on activities were great to get the students engaged"
- "The kids seem more aware of what foods are good or not for them"



Hillarie Roth
Nutrition Educator



Joy Weisner
Nutrition Educator



Sandy Tarter
Nutrition Coordinator



Jael Wolf
Nutrition Educator



Supporting Healthy Relationships



The future of our community begins at home. Good relationships are universally important to child and adult well-being. Families do not exist in isolation; they are influenced by surrounding people, institutions, social norms, and policies. Extension programs offer knowledge and support. To see a strong, successful county in 2045, we need to focus on building strong families today.



The Landscape

Top 211 call?

**Housing
(again)**

62 kids' books

were recorded by parents in the Dunn Co. Jail and mailed to their children via Literacy Link and Making Reading Memories

95%

of parents who took our co-parenting classes are now more confident they can keep their child "out of the middle"

**145 volunteers
\$16,000+ value**

14 county and non-profit projects completed via the **United Way Day of Caring Fall of 2024**

Achieving More Together



Local Partners: Arbor Place, Bridge to Hope, Center for Independent Living, Chamber of Commerce, Clerk of Court, Community Foundation, Dunn Co. Housing Workgroup, Dunn Co. Jail, Economic Development, Health Department, Human Services, Human Resources, Housing Action Team, Head Start, Health Dunn Right, Friday Play Group, Literacy Link, Public Library, United Way of St. Croix and Red Cedar Valleys.

Serving on State-wide Extension Teams: Early Childhood Education, Fatherhood, Housing, Co-Parenting, Wisconsin's Children, and Youth Forward Wisconsin

Community Impacts 2024

- ★ Dunn County consistently ranked in the top 4 Wisconsin counties taking Extension parenting classes, statewide
- ★ Community-serving county staffers regularly take classes we offer, especially those focused on mental health and children
- ★ United Way's merger resulted in a huge Day of Caring for Dunn Co. and created new local services (Luisa served on the board through the merger and co-chaired the Day of Caring)



Raising a Thinking Child

Two 6-week series were offered in 2024 for parents of children ages 4-7 to help their children become good problem-solvers and caring, helpful humans. Classes are ongoing and free to Dunn residents.

"I can see my son problem solving more and being able to think things through. I believe I am more open minded and thinking before I react as well." "The program was excellent with a lot of helpful resources, effective tips and strategies and well organized by the two instructors." – Comments from post-class survey (2024)



Dunn's Housing & Childcare Needs

Hundreds of hours were dedicated to education and coalition-building this year, as several county teams, which included the Extension Family Educator, focused their efforts on the local housing crisis. The work will continue into the future as the problem is complicated and no easy answers have arisen.

A summit with local stakeholders (government agencies, non-profits, major employers, health care providers, child care centers, service providers) exposed critical underlying issues in the reliable and affordable provision of childcare in Dunn County. Attendees concluded that "the model is broken," leaving everyone involved worried. A new coalition, via Health Dunn Right, with support from our Extension Community Development Educator, will be working on this issue in the coming years.



It's critical that Dunn County supports family education and outreach. Most of our participants report they have never taken a parenting class before. I am glad to offer reliable Extension resources to help our families thrive.

Luisa Gerasimo
Human Development
and Relationships Educator



Wisconsin 4-H

Supporting Our Youth



4-H is the largest youth development organization in the United States. We build community with county wide projects and events throughout the year. We have project clubs that meet regularly, and volunteer project leaders who are ready to help you on your 4-H journey. Our motto, "Learn by Doing," is at the heart of everything we do. Through hands-on projects, engaging activities, and the guidance of dedicated adult mentors, 4-H members gain practical experience and develop skills that will serve them throughout their lives.

The Landscape

275

Enrolled Youth
down 0.7% from 2023

61

First Year Members
down 14.1% from 2023

52

adult volunteers

\$64,325.34

value of hours volunteered

Achieving More Together



UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In 2023, Dunn County 4-H partnered with Clearwater Trout Unlimited, Red Cedar Speedway, Mabel Tainter Theater, Evolving Colors, Elk Mound School District, Boyceville School District and various townships who host club meetings.

Community Impacts In 2024

- 239 youth participated in the Dunn County fair where they displayed projects and participated in animal shows for the public to view.
- The Youth Activities Council has provided services to 4-H members and the community. They hosted the Battle of the Clubs and a Halloween party for 4-H members, and donated blankets to Bridge to Hope.



Wisconsin 4-H

Stuffed Animal Show

Dunn County 4-H hosted the first Cloverbud Stuffed Animal Show at the Dunn County Fair. This show gave members who are not old enough to show animals a way to practice their showmanship skills. It also encouraged their creativity as they were asked to create a backstory for their animals.



Art U

In collaboration with the UW-Stout Art Education program, we offered a series of art lessons both virtually and in-person, culminating in an art show and celebration. Art education students led these lessons for both members and non-members. Students in grades K-6 participated virtually, while those in grades 7 and up attended in-person sessions. Over 50 youth from Dunn, Chippewa, and Eau Claire County participated.

4-H Summer Camp

Studies indicate that the benefits of camp experiences extend well into adulthood. We recruited and trained 19 high school 4-H members to serve as counselors. These young leaders were instrumental in planning and executing a 4-day, 3-night base camp at Kamp Kenwood for 51 campers, as well as an outpost adventure for 16 campers at Lake Wissota State Park.



"Through this activity he learned a lot of responsibility on how to care for his stuffed animal and prepare it for show."
-Stuffed Animal Show Parent



"I've learned how to be a better leader and be in charge of a large group and lead the conversation."



Zachary Rozmiarek
4-H Program Educator

I am continuing to find new experiences for members, while honoring the traditions that are in place. I am excited to find new ways to serve our 4-H youth and the Dunn County community as a whole.



Community Development

Supporting Our Community



In May 2024, we welcomed a new Community and Leadership Development Educator, Garret Zastoupil. This position is focused on Organizational and Leadership Development and Local Government Education. With this new focus, Garret's role is to support local governments and community organizations expand their reach and deepen their impact.

Facilitating Community Conversations

In 2024, Garret collaborated with the Health Dunn Right Coalition to help structure the Health Dunn Right Kick Off in December 2024. Garret connected leadership with the "Strategic Doing" model to structure session.

Achieving More Together



Garret is co-chairing the Childcare Action Team of Health Dunn Right and has met with various community organizations to understand the challenge and build collective capacity to address it.

Building Stronger Relationships

In collaboration with the statewide Local Government Education Program, Garret has worked with the Towns Association and other partners to move forward efforts that strengthen fire and emergency medical services.



Garret Zastoupil
Community Development Educator

I started as the regional Community Development Educator in mid May. I came from Northland College, where I served as an Assistant Professor of Sustainable Rural Economic Development. I completed my PhD at UW-Madison in Human Ecology and am excited to serve the communities of Dunn County.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

extension.wisc.edu | info@extension.wisc.edu