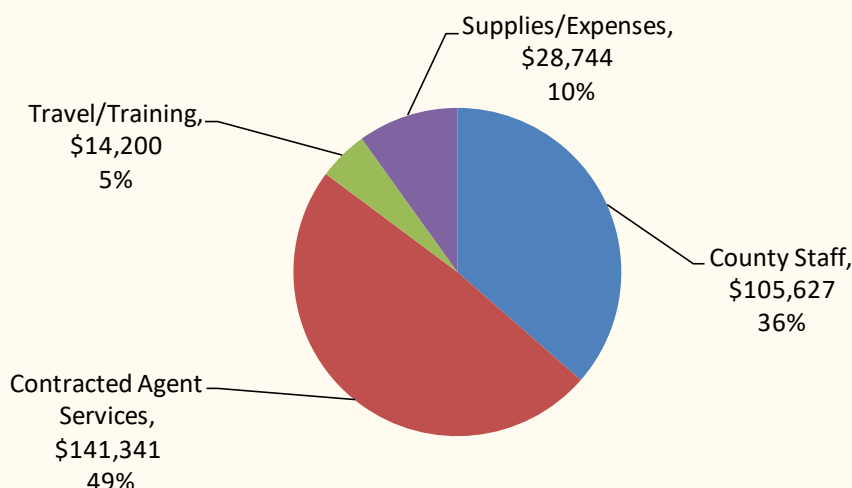


Oconto County UW-Extension

2015 Annual Report

Budget Expenditures



Budgeted -- \$289,912

Expenditures, Actual -- \$263,145

Budgeted, Unspent -- \$ 26,767

Through the University of Wisconsin-Extension, people of Wisconsin and beyond can access university resources and engage in learning, wherever they live and work.

The University of Wisconsin Extension offices are located in all 72 counties within the State. UW-Extension is funded from a combination of County, State, Federal and program/ research funds. Oconto County provides **40%** of educator salaries plus support staff and operation costs. The State provides 60% of salaries plus many forms of support, including state specialists who can be called upon to provide research, local education or programming in our county.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture continues to be a major economic driver in Oconto County. The agriculture industry provides 4,193 jobs in the county. It also contributes \$1.3 billion in business sales and \$126.4 million to the county's income. The dairy industry plays a large role in the economic impact in Oconto County. In 2012, there were 154 dairy farms and 20,100 dairy cows in Oconto County. On farm milk production accounted for \$97.3 million in business sales, and dairy processing produced another \$1.06 billion in sales.

Oconto and Marinette County UW-Extension have an informal specialization agreement between the two counties, so that dairy, livestock, agronomy, and horticulture programming can be provided to all clientele. Main programming for the Oconto County Agriculture Agent focuses on dairy, with additional programming pertaining to other livestock production and animal health needs. The Agriculture Agent works with agricultural producers to bring new ideas, research-based and unbiased information to the county's approximately 929 farms.

Methods of Communication with Clientele

The Agriculture Agent works one-on-one with producers during farm visits and over the phone to resolve production challenges. This includes a wide range of topics from choosing appropriate stall design to more complex issues like determining a problem with a dairy or livestock operation.

This agent prepares newsletters for agricultural producers informing them of upcoming educational programs available to them in Oconto County and surrounding areas, providing them with information on timely agriculture topics and educational events. Throughout the year, Sarah also promotes agriculture to the public through weekly newspaper articles, monthly radio show, and by being involved with the Oconto County Fair, Oconto County Livestock Committee, Oconto County Breakfast on the Farm and the Oconto County Dairy Promotions Committee.

Agriculture Production and Farm Management

Oconto County continues to have a large percentage of land devoted to agriculture and a great diversity of agricultural crops and animals. Dairy accounts for the largest annual income of all agricultural commodities in Oconto County.

Farmers and local agricultural professionals look to their UW-Extension Agriculture Agent for the latest university research to improve the profitability and sustainability of all types of agriculture. Area meetings are held by university researchers highlighting their current research projects. The Agriculture Agent attends these and is then able to share this information with producers to help them improve their production practices.

Farm Financial Management

The volatility of milk and crop prices can lead to financial insecurity on many farms. This creates complications for retirement of current producers and transferring the farm to the next generation. When Oconto agriculture producers were surveyed in 2014, a majority (51 percent) of the respondents planned to actively farm more than 10 years. Many producers have identified potential successors for their operation, but 35 percent of the respondents have not identified any successor for their operation. UW-Extension works one-on-one with producers looking to make changes to their farming operations or transfer their farm to the next generation.

The Oconto County UW-Extension office receives many calls every year from farmland owners and renters of farmland regarding the fair market value of farmland rental rates. This information is kept up-to-date by the Agriculture Agent.

Animal Health/Well-Being

In the 2014 Needs Assessment survey performed by the Agriculture Agent of agriculture producers in Oconto County, animal health topics were a top priority for education. As a response to producers need, local meetings were hosted by the Agriculture Agents in the topics of milk quality, beef cattle management and pasture management. Local Extension meetings feature a timely topic presented by the Agriculture Agent in addition to topics presented by UW-Extension State Specialists.

Future programming will be developed by the Agriculture Agent to address the educational priorities of Oconto County.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (CNRED)

The CNRED Programming effort in 2015 centered around six major efforts with more than 175 meetings and facilitation events, and publishing timely newspaper articles and email notices on varied topics.

- (1) **Environmental and Natural Resources Protection,**
- (2) **Organizational Development and Capacity Building of Non-Profits,**
- (3) **Land Use education and planning,**
- (4) **Outdoor Recreation Development and Planning,**
- (5) **Economic Development and Planning,**
- (6) **Local Government Support.**

Within Oconto County, there are more than 300 lakes that not only provide habitat for many animal species but also have a very positive impact on Oconto's tourism economy. Millions of dollars each year are attributed to the water resources within the county. Over the last year, the CNRED programming has assisted the **Land Conservation Department in drafting a Ten Year Plan** which will further safeguard this vital resource into the future. Additionally, programs geared toward **strengthening the Lakes Associations and Districts** through a re-organization of the Oconto County Lakes and Waterways Association will ensure the public and shoreline owners will have a voice in lake management. The CNRED program has committed hundreds of hours in support of research and public empowerment efforts through **partnering with UW-Stevens Point** to conduct a Lake Management Resource Grant that will continue throughout 2017 with the study of 30 lakes. **Groundwater testing** is also very vital and our office has worked with 28 local residents to test their home wells to determine their safety levels. Access to the water is vital as well in Wisconsin and working with the City of Oconto in **meeting ADA standards** for fishing platforms has opened up resources to those with disabilities to be able to enjoy the outdoors with their family and friends.

Over the past year, the CNRED program has collaborated with a number of Oconto County Departments providing research, technical and facilitation programming. Working closely with the **Planning Department** ensuring that the great work they did with Farmland Preservation was inclusive of key land use requirements and technically accurate. Jointly working with **Parks and Recreation** to identify needs within county recreational sites, while providing local attitude and technical information into the County Hazard Mitigation Plan in collaboration with **Emergency Management Government**, while providing technical assistance and resources to the **Economic Development Corporation** in designing safety protocols on trail systems within the county, and developing a **Broadband Team** with the goal of bringing much needed improvement of technological infrastructure into the county potentially bringing millions of dollars' worth of impact at the same time improving the level of "quality of life" for Oconto County residents and Business owners. The **County Administration** called upon CNRED to work collaboratively with **Oconto Economic Development** to design an approach to identify ideas on how to best manage the fiscal shortfall the county was facing. Through designing and facilitating some strategic planning steps the county was able to develop strategies addressing the short term needs of the county.

Some 25 local residents looking to startup a business and wanting to understand key aspects such as: Naming a Business, Recording their Business, selecting a Business Legal Type, acquiring a Federal Tax Number have come into our office for one-on-one assistance. Additionally, non-profits looking to startup (as did Team Oconto a fishing tournament organization) received assistance in developing their bylaws, designing their organizational structure, designing marketing strategies, and technical assistance in seeking non-profit status under 501.c3. While ongoing non-profits, such as the Marinette & Oconto County's Literacy Council, which provides tutors to some 15 adult learners from countries including Italy, China, South America and even our own Oconto Residents who struggle with reading and math received technical support in drafting legal contracts, designing a marketing approach, learning aspects of running a Board of Directors, and implementing their 5-year Plan. The City of Oconto called upon the CNRED program to help them design an approach to evaluate their multi-year efforts in improving the city's Mainstreet and tourism attractions. Our CNRED staff recruited and taught local volunteers and collaboratively brought in colleagues and volunteers from the city of Algoma to assess the city's vital tourism appeal to outsiders which has led to dozens of ideas Oconto is exploring to enhance their city.

FAMILY LIVING PROGRAMS

The Oconto County UW-Extension Family Living Program focuses on building knowledge and skills that people use to make informed decisions about their wellbeing, relationships and resources. Life is filled with challenges and daily struggles. Today, families and individuals have limited resources of time, money, energy and often families do not have extended family support. The Family Living team strives to prioritize programs so that we can create the most impact with our county partners to meet the needs of people in Oconto County. In 2015, the following programs helped residents better manage resources, helped residents make healthy informed choices, and helped families develop skills for parenting and plan for the future by responding effectively to life changes.

Healthy Populations

- Healthy aging of older adult populations is a national concern. Over 93% of older adults in Oconto County live out in communities, for these individuals living independently provides freedom from economic, emotional and physical hardships. Family Living older adult programs offered cover health, safety and money management topics, a few examples include: *Wake up Your Memory*, *Sleep is Medicine*, *Arthritis Advice*, *Energy Saving at Home*, *Food Labels*, *Identity Theft Prevention*, and *Homemade Freezer Meals*.
- Renewed interest in home food preservation and concern about food safety has created a need for education and safety awareness for canners and preservers. Family Living Agent and Oconto County Master Food Preserver volunteers conducted two hands-on food preservation workshops. Participants learned the fundamentals of properly and safely preserving foods at home, as well as increase their knowledge on new research-tested canning equipment.
- As a result of the county's investment in UW-Extension's Family Living Program, the federally funded **Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program** educators reached 2,246 low income Oconto County residents in 2015 (unduplicated count), conducting education on stretching limited food dollars, food preparation and choosing healthy foods. Nutrition education took place in the Oconto, Suring and Gillett Elementary Schools, at New View Industries in Gillett, the Kingdom Come Food Pantry in Oconto Falls, NEWCAP in Oconto, Commission on Aging Meal Sites, in participant's homes, and other locations throughout the county.

Parenting Connections

- Family Living Programs play an important role in helping families strengthen relationships. Whether it's learning how to blend a step family, raising children or identifying skills parents need to make a co-parenting relationship helpful and supportive; parenting classes return results. More than 1300 residents participated in **Parenting Resource Center** program events, including: *Strengthening Families*, *Parenting Boot Camp*, *Fishing for Fun* and weekly offered *Play Group* sessions hosted at four of our county partner locations in Oconto County. *Strengthening Families* is a nationally recognized prevention program that brings both health and economic benefits to youth, families, and communities long after the program ends. Moreover, youth participants are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs in the future.
- The **Healthy Babies Program** initially developed as a collaborative effort between Oconto County's Health and Human Services and UW-Extension Family Living Program. Over the past year Healthy Babies program provided invaluable home visitations to 4 teen parents and 12 first-time parents in Oconto County. The primary purpose of this program is to reduce incidence and economic costs of child abuse and neglect by identifying overburdened families and offering support and education.

Stronger Economies

- Family Living Programs are having a solid impact on individuals and families' financial wellbeing. The Family Living Agent in partnership with Oconto Falls Community Library provided workshops on *Planning for Home Buyers* and *Money Management Tools*. When families strengthen their financial security, communities benefit also, as families contribute to the groundwork for increased economic growth.
- To make financial information more accessible to families with young children, *Money Smart in Head Start* newsletters are provided to the Oconto County Head Start program. The newsletters provide relevant and timely financial information. A recent follow-up survey on the *Money Smart* newsletter reported a range of positive financial behaviors, including: setting goals, spending less, paying down debt and paying fewer late fees.

By means of improving people's lives, Family Living Programs reduce the economic and social service costs to local government and make Oconto County communities stronger. Therefore, UW-Extension Family Living programs are an excellent public investment.

4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



For more than a century, Wisconsin 4-H Youth Development has worked to engage youth participants throughout the state in leadership training, community-building experiences, and experiential-learning opportunities to better their own lives and the lives of the people around them.

One of the 4-H Youth Development Programs administered locally in Oconto County is Teen Court. Teen Court is an option for youth offenders who meet set criteria to appear before a panel of their peers. They then receive sanctions for an offense to which they have pled guilty in a traditional court. The Oconto County Teen Court panel currently consists of eight youth from four of the five school districts in the county.

Teen Court uses a Restorative Justice model to involve youth offenders, community, and victims in amending the harm done by the youth offender's actions. Teen Court in Oconto County is administered by the 4-H Youth Development Program through the University of Wisconsin – Extension, in cooperation with local judges. The 4-H Youth Development Agent serves as coordinator; a volunteer 4-H Youth Development Advocate is available for coaching the respondent (offender) through career and goal-setting sanctions.

IMPACTS

Panel Members shared the following regarding the impact of the program on themselves:

- *"Teen Court has had more of an impact on me than anything I have done throughout my entire high school career. It has opened my eyes to way more than I could have ever imagined and broadened my horizons greatly."*
- *"Teen Court has allowed me to be more open and accepting of other peoples' life situations and struggles."*
- *"One of the biggest things Teen Court does for all of us on the panel is teaches us to respect others and other cultures, and to understand them more."*
- *"I was surprised by the sense of community involvement and service I feel from being an active member of the Teen Court panel."*

Youth Offenders had this to say about the program:

- *"People at Teen Court seemed to care that I do well"*
- *"I learned something from my sanctions"*
- *"I would recommend Teen Court to my friends"*
- *"It made me feel like I was giving something back to the community."*

Community

Panel members, in a Community Capitals evaluation stated that they felt Teen Court's most important impact on the community that youth get a second chance. They noted that Teen Court also creates community connections on many levels.

Teen Court panel members and offenders provided a value of nearly \$12,000 of community service in 2015.

Oconto County UW-Extension 2015 Staff

Agriculture

Sarah Mills-Lloyd, Agriculture Agent

Community, Natural Resource & Economic Development

Dale Mohr, Community, Natural Resource, and Economic Development Agent

Family Living

Jill Cholewa, Family Living Agent (Began April 1, 2015)

- Barb Truttman, Parent Resource Center Educator
- Julie Raasch, Healthy Babies Program Coordinator

4-H Youth Development

Paula Huff, 4-H Youth Development Agent

Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program

John Pinkart, Nutrition Education Coordinator / Department Head

- Dawn Schroepfer, Nutrition Educator
- Lori Schuettelpelz, Nutrition Education Program Educator

Support Staff

Karen Behnke, Program Assistant—4-H Youth Development / Agriculture

Becky Dolata, Program Assistant—Family Living / Community, Natural Resource & Economic Development

Oconto County UW-Extension Staff teamed up to beautify the Courthouse landscape with donated flowers and their time.

