



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
OCONTO COUNTY



ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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University of Wisconsin-Madison Extension Oconto County

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UW-MADISON EXTENSION

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES *with* THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

As a statewide engagement arm of UW–Madison, the Division of Extension embodies the Wisconsin Idea to extend university knowledge to every corner of the state. That mission started in 1912 with Extension’s first agent making farm visits and continues today along with community and business development, youth engagement, and well-being programming. Our statewide network of educators and specialists with the UW–Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences and on UW campuses across Wisconsin is responding every day to emerging and longstanding hurdles residents are overcoming to compete and prosper. We’ve identified key opportunities to leverage local resources and leading research to affect change and improve lives through:

Supporting Wisconsin’s Agriculture Industry))

We use applied research from UW-Madison’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in addition to other Campuses along with educational outreach to support an economically viable agricultural industry that produces safe food in an environmentally responsible manner.

Fostering Leadership and Civic Engagement))

We work with communities across the state to support individuals, groups, and organizations to enhance quality of life and improve overall well-being, leading to stronger communities today and for generations to come.

Creating Positive, Healthy Change))

We catalyze positive change in Wisconsin families through evidence-based programs focused on nutrition, food security, food safety, chronic disease prevention, mental health, and substance misuse.

Empowering Families and Communities))

We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding, enhance aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents, and help families put technology, mindfulness, and financial awareness to use.

Enhancing Resilient Natural Resource Systems))

We help individuals and communities make informed decisions that support the state’s rich land, water, and mineral resources. We’re working to ensure that our resources remain at the heart of our communities, economies, and state identity.

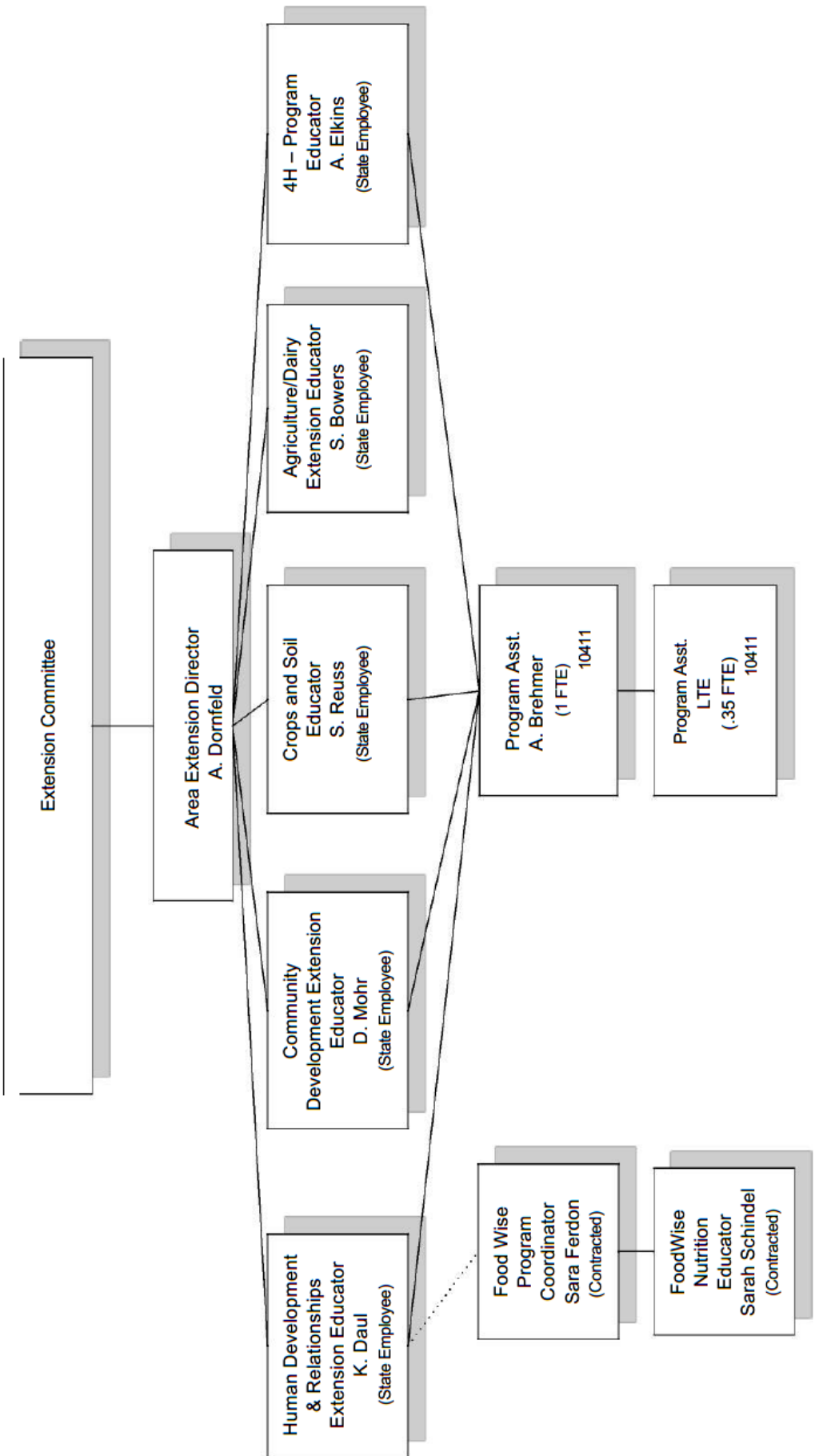
Furthering Positive Youth Development))

We prepare the youth of today to become effective, empathetic leaders of tomorrow. From teens advising local government to Wisconsin 4-H clubs, we offer diverse educational opportunities that put youth on the path to success in Wisconsin and beyond..

Home Committee))

Extension reports to the Land & Water Resources committee. They meet the first Tuesday after the first Monday of each month. The members of the committee are; Chris Augustine, Tim Cole, Wayne Kaczowski, Pat Scanlan, and Keith Schneider.

EXTENSION OFFICE





Agriculture

Agriculture Programming: The regional model

2023 Agricultural Extension programming was delivered through the recently adopted regional educator model. Scott Reuss served Crops/Soils programming needs (Langlade, Marinette, Oconto & Shawano Counties) and Stephanie Bowers joined the team in July, serving as the Regional Dairy Educator for Oconto County, along with Shawano, Outagamie, and Winnebago. Horticulture programming is not generally delivered through this model.

Both in-person and virtual events (webinars) are utilized to provide convenient and accessible means for farms and agricultural service providers to engage with Extension programming. Local field days and workshops are still the cornerstone of Extension Agriculture programming. Having state-wide offered webinars allows local farms and service providers better access to the latest research findings and recommended practices in all topic areas.

Regional educators are the coordinators of local events and information transfer, and assist with state-wide efforts. Not all state-wide efforts are webinars, as numerous conferences, workshop series, and educational resources are developed that reach a broader audience. Extension educators serve as a bridge between academic knowledge and practical application, helping farms stay updated on industry advancements and improve their operations effectively.

Collaboration drives Extension educators' ability to efficiently provide high-quality programming to Oconto County farms and agricultural service providers. By working together with various stakeholders such as the Green Bay West Shores Demonstration Farm Network, Land & Water Conservation, Farm Service Agency & NRCS, Breakfast on the Farm committees, County Fairs, and local producer groups, Extension can reach larger audiences and offer more relevant events. This collaborative approach allows for the pooling of resources, expertise, and networks, resulting in a more comprehensive and impactful outreach strategy. By leveraging the strengths and resources of each partner, Extension programs can effectively address the diverse needs and interests of agricultural communities, ultimately leading to improved outcomes for farmers and stakeholders alike.

Ag Research

Research data drives Extension educational information. Reuss adds to local and state-wide programming by conducting many different on-farm research projects.

2023 projects included:

- Winter wheat nitrogen and sulfur rate effects on yield;
- Five sites of biological product effects on corn yield and nitrogen needs;
- Nitrogen rates/sources effect on winter triticale yield; Site also in place for 2024 data collection.
- Local site of data collection for WI Alfalfa Yield and Persistence project.



Agriculture

Crops/Soils Programs delivered in 2023

Locally conducted field days and events still drive Extension programming at the county level. Two examples of high-impact programs brought into the region via Extension in 2023 were the Winter Wheat Management and Drones in Agriculture Field Day and the Grain Marketing & Crop Insurance Curriculum Kick-Off event featuring Nebraska Ag Economist Cory Walters. Most local events also feature out-of-county Extension/UW System personnel or resources.

Alfalfa and corn silage harvest management projects are a key component of forage educational programming. These projects help forage producers achieve optimal forage quality and production on their alfalfa and corn silage acres, while also receiving new management resources.

Many programming topics were delivered through events held in or very near Oconto County. Focal topics included Christmas Tree pest management, Pesticide Applicator Training, Youth Machinery and Tractor Safety Certification, Manure Applicator Training, Cropping Systems Economics, Land Rent Contracting, Winter Wheat Management, Winter annual forage management, Corn Silage Management, Nutrient management, and others. Additionally, many producers contact Reuss directly to get topic-specific information or to request in-field consultations regarding problem situations.

In total, Reuss directly contacted approximately 350 Oconto County farms via agricultural programming efforts, approximately 435 individuals at ag-specific displays at the Breakfast on the Farm and County Fair; and 30 individuals through direct horticultural inquiries. Reuss indirectly contacts many Cty. residents through the monthly radio show (1st Friday, 8-9 a.m. on WOCO) which is used to discuss agricultural situations, programming, and Q & A.

Contact: Scott Reuss
Crops and Soils Extension Educator
Langlade, Marinette, Oconto, and Shawano
Counties

scott.reuss@wisc.edu

715-732-7510 or cell/text 715-701-0966



Attendees of the Winter Wheat & Drones in Ag Field Day held at LeMere Farms, July 19th.

Program Area Goals for 2024

The overall goal of 2024 programming is to maximize on-farm profitability and year to year sustainability. Specific goals include:

- Maximizing crop income return to fertilizer investment and train farms to write their own Nutrient Mgmt. plans.
- Maximize farm return to forage production through optimized harvest timing and storage.
- Minimizing opportunity for nitrates to enter ground water from crop fertilization practices.
- Improving agronomic practices (planting date, rate, selection) in all crops
- Improve management of new cropping practices, such as use of cover crops and alternative forage species.
- Utilize on-farm sites to gather production and economic data for specialty crop production.





Agriculture

Dairy Programming Delivered in 2023:

2023 welcomed Stephanie Bowers as the new Regional Dairy Educator, starting in mid-July. The majority of her efforts in late 2023 included meeting with local stakeholders to determine the most critical needs facing Oconto dairy producers.



Contact: Stephanie Bowers, M.S.
Regional Dairy Educator serving
Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano &
Winnebago Counties
920-470-0531
stephanie.bowers@wisc.edu

Dairy Program Area Goals for 2024:

The overall goal of 2024 programming is to focus on areas of critical importance to Oconto dairy producers, especially profitability and water quality.

Specific goals include:

- Dairy Heifer Grazing Learning Hub collaboration with Grassland 2.0
- Automatic Milking Systems User Group concept launch
- Collaborate with Extension colleagues to bring COMET Mental Health Training to Oconto County
- Increasing awareness and participation in Badger Dairy Insight Webinars



What challenges does 2024 hold for producers? Pest outbreaks, drought (uneven soybean stand due to dry germination conditions in 2023 pictured above), excess moisture? Extension is ready to help producers meet those challenges.



Community Development



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

BRINGING COLLABORATION & COST EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS TO OCONTO COUNTY THROUGH...

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,

ORGANIZATIONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT,

& LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY BUILDING

My Mission: *Work alongside you identifying critical local needs, strategize doable solutions, organize responses, create actionable steps, and roll up my sleeves to make positive things happen and to positively transform local organization, business or community."*

My Purpose:

- ☐ Cutting local costs to mandated services;
- ☐ Training Local Officials to maximize their community resources;
- ☐ Collaborating with County Depts. to lower their project costs;
- ☐ Supporting non-profits to lower costs and save resources.

KEY LOCAL PROJECTS IN 2023:

1. **Working with Local Municipal Courts** to offer a Restorative Justice Program reaching from City of Oconto to Suring;
2. **Collaboration with Land & Water Conservation Dept.** in studying local lakes and cost sharing resources teaming up to bring in \$100,000 for the study;
3. **Local Government Education** – 'One-on-One' Plan Commission Trainings/workshops for Local Government Officials dealing with controversial land use issues;
4. **Working with local officials & the Mountain Historical Society** to preserve and rehab the historic 'Green Lake National Forest Park' site and Fireman's Park.



Dale Mohr,
Your County Agent.



PEOPLE SERVED:

210 Riparian Owners;
20 Local Government Officials;
15 Non-Profit Members;
7 Youth Jurors, 10 Youth Court Cases;
11 Local entrepreneurs;

PARTNERED WITH:

- Local Municipal Judges & Law Enforcement;
- County Staff/Department Heads;
- Wis. Department of Natural Resources;
- UW-Stevens Point;
- Oconto County Lakes & Waterways Assoc.

GRANTS PARTNERED ON:

WDNR Grant \$85,000;
Oconto County Healthy Waters Grants.



Community Development

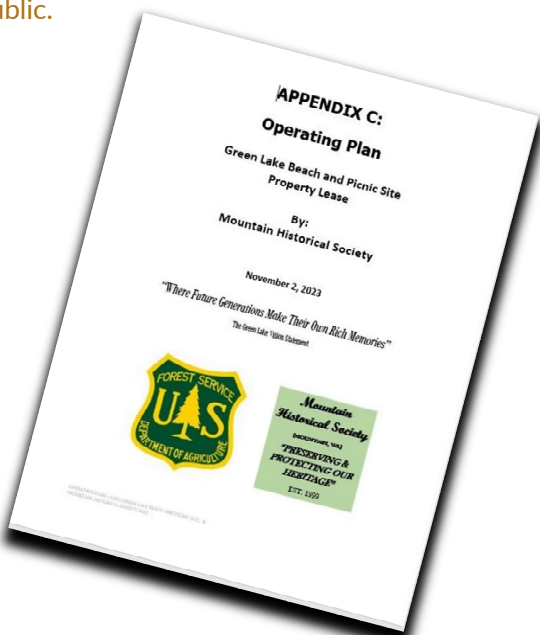
PRESERVING SURFACE WATERS

THROUGH THE COLLABORATION OF MULTIPLE AGENCIES
- FUNDED IN LARGE PART BY WDNR GRANTS TOTALING
\$700,000...

Going on the 9th year since our concerned group of residents identified the need **“to have the healthiest waters in Wisconsin”** our team of UW-Extension, Land & Water Conservation Department, non-profits, lake Associations & Districts, UW – Stevens Point, WI Department of Natural Resources, and Oconto County Lakes and Waterways Assoc., have pooled our limited resources and at no actual costs to the county have studied more than 54 lakes regarding their respective ecosystems while gathering information about the hopes and concerns of property owners and lake users.

FINALIZED A FEDERAL LAND LEASE BETWEEN THE TOWN OF MOUNTAIN & U.S. FOREST SERVICE

The Operating Plan was approved November 2023, and identifies a Mission, a Vision and Goals for reopening this once treasured park site to the public.



TEEN COURT COMPLETES ANOTHER YEAR!



Teen Court is established within the Wisc. State Statutes, affording local Judiciaries the option to defer a judgment in lieu of sanctions completed. In short, this is a second chance for youth ages 10 to 17 yrs. **Dale Mohr** provides this County service (each month during the evening at the Courthouse) which promotes volunteerism, leadership opportunities, team building, and community healing with members of the Teen Jury.

This year we were successful in meeting the needs of the local municipalities in offering alternatives to municipal citations. Seven teens went through the program completing individualized sanctions designed to help them give back to the community, make amends with any victims and to improve their own self growth.

One of our biggest advocates passed away this year, Honorable Judge Michael Bake. His support and encouragement will be missed.

As my time as a Teen Court panelist (Juror) comes to a close, I intend to carry the lessons I learned and the skills I acquired from Teen Court into the next chapter of my life. - **Oconto County Teen Court Student**

Our goal remains the same... to be able to take **Teen Court** beyond the County Courthouse and into the local communities, promoting safer neighborhoods while growing future leaders.



Healthy Choices Healthy Lives

FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). 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.



Oconto County Landscape

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

829

county residents experience both limited income and low access to a grocery store



3,657

county residents use SNAP benefits to purchase food for themselves and their families.*



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 Oconto County, FoodWise partners with schools, jobsites, community gardens, Head Start programs, senior meal programs, and food pantries to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.

Community

Impacts in 2023

Engaged with 420 learners around nutrition education topics in a variety of settings, including early care and education centers, K-12 school settings, and food pantries.

Partnered with Gillett Elementary school to expand the Harvest of the Month campaign, reaching students, parents & caregivers with messages in English & Spanish to promote eating Wisconsin-grown fruits & vegetables.

Worked with numerous organizations to establish a community garden & donate 4,954 pounds of produce to food pantry sites serving community members with limited income.

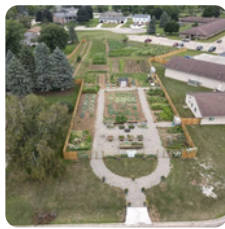
^County Health Rankings

* WI Dept of Administration and WI Dept of Health Services

Inspiring Collaborations



- Oconto is a large county with one farmer's market and limited access to food pantries and healthy food.
- Numerous local organizations worked together to start the community garden.
- Local organizations and volunteers contributed efforts to clear land and till in manure, post-hole digging, fence building, water collection system to name a few.
- Volunteers worked through the season planting, weeding, watering, and harvesting.
- A total of 4,954 lbs. of produce were donated to the Kingdom Come Food Pantry and distributed to other more rural pantries in the county.
- Future plans include composting, crop rotation, cover crops, water erosion prevention, irrigation and an area for education.



Please contact Sarah Schindel at (920) 834-6898 with any garden related questions or ideas.

Connect With Us

Contact Us

715-732-7516

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sarah.ferdon@wisc.edu

sarah.schindel@wisc.edu



Sarah Ferdon
Nutrition Coordinator

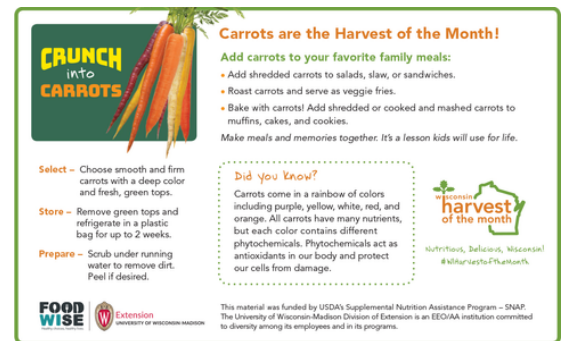


Sarah Schindel
Nutrition Educator



Harvest of the month (HOM) was implemented at Gillett Elementary school. HOM encourages students to consume locally grown produce. It also decreases food waste in the lunch room.

A comprehensive effort included classroom lessons, postcards to parents, lunchroom posters, Facebook ads, and taste-testing.





Human Development & Relationships

Learning and Leaning In



2023 was a year of learning about the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension, and Oconto County. The Human Development and Relationships Institute and the Lifespan Program was strategic in its plans for onboarding and getting connected to resources. Much time was devoted to intentional “leaning in” to learn how to serve our residents best and build relationships and connections. We remain connected and committed to our communities.

Lifespan and Caregiving



Financial Literacy



Transportation and Mental Health

Planning AHEAD, Wise Wisconsin, Aging Mastery, Technology Support, Physical Health Support, Employed Caregivers

Money Matters, Financial Coaching, Literacy in the classroom, Rent Smart

Healthy Oconto County committees, Partnerships with United Way, healthcare providers, Commission on Aging, ADRC

University of Wisconsin-Madison,
Division of Extension, Oconto County

100+

hours of training, shadowing, and personal development to bring education to community

100%

of individuals had an increase in knowledge about Lifespan and Financial literacy programming

20+

community members'/stakeholders' 1-on-1 meetings

86%

financial clients who learned a new financial management strategy (statewide)

58

active contacts receive the new e-newsletter



Human Development & Relationships

Programming Overview

Planning AHEAD - A 7-session course that helps adults of all ages to make end-of-life financial, healthcare, and final wishes decisions in order to reduce the stress experienced by survivors and to ensure that their wishes are honored. *Completed: Facilitator training, program shadowing, tech/participant support, with implementation in 1/2024.*

Strong Bodies - A series of strength training sessions where older adults learn best practices and learn nutrition and health education. Participants engage in regular strength training exercises to improve strength, balance, and flexibility so they can stay healthy and socially connected. (12 weeks/24 classes) *Completed: Facilitator training, program shadowing, with implementation in 1/2024.*

Encouraging Financial Conversations - A six-module course for social workers, case managers, home visitors, and community agency staff where they learn about financial competency skills such as goal setting, budgeting, building credit and paying off debts, strategies for saving money, and how to engage their clients in money management discussions. The goal of this effort is to build their knowledge and confidence when engaging clients in financial conversations. *Completed: Facilitator training, program shadowing*

Financial Coaching - A 4-day financial coaching workshop (A/4 Financial Coaching Foundations online course) for financial professionals/educators to learn and practice coaching techniques for assisting clients in reaching financial goals. *Completed: Coaching certification, with implementation in 3/2024.*



Katie Daul, Human Development and Relationships Educator
Katie.Daul@wisc.edu <https://oconto.extension.wisc.edu/>



Positive Youth Development

When youth join 4-H, they're a part of something big! 4-H is the nations largest youth development organization, with more than six million members and over 90,000 clubs across the nation. We provide a place for all kids to reach their full potential. They're able to see the world beyond themselves through hands-on, research-based experiences in every corner of Wisconsin.

Most 4-H youth and the adults who care about them get their start with a 4-H club in their community. Based on their interests and guided by adult mentors, youth develop their own pathway.

In Wisconsin alone, there are more than 500 distinct project-based activities to spark lifelong learning, including: Science, technology, engineering and math, civic engagement, health programs, agriculture, and more!

Clubs can meet in a variety of settings so we can support youth where they are in the community, in schools, after school, and in military settings. In the past year the Oconto County 4-H program has seen significant growth in current clubs as well as the addition of some in-school and summer school clubs. The in-school clubs included, a Kinder-clover exploration club, as 2nd grade scientist club, and a 5th grade crochet special interest club.

You can see our year end membership to the right, which shows a significant increase in our enrolled youth since last year. This year a marketing flyer was developed and distributed to all county schools to promote the program and an information and educational booth was hosted at the monthly community family nights held at the Oconto Bellin Health Center. 4-H enrollment is open year-round, with a deadline to add/change projects for annua fair participation.

In addition to the club experience 4-H youth can take part in camps, educational travel experiences, workshops, virtual programs, take and learn kits, and much more, as they explore their sparks.



44% increase

in membership from the previous year



150

First year members



184

First Generation Members

4X

more likely to make contributions to their communities

2X

more likely to be civically active

2X

more likely to participate in out-of-school science programs

2X

more likely to make healthier choices





Positive Youth Development

The Oconto County 4-H Program offers a variety of educational opportunities throughout the year. A list of program highlights can be found below:

- In Person Summer School (OES)
- OHS Business Student Career Mentorship
- Overnight Summer Camp
- State-wide Virtual Learning Community
- Oconto County Youth Fair
- School Marketing Campaign
- Creative Arts Festival
- Stem Day Camp
- Youth Thriving Survey
- * Winter Teen Leadership Camp
- * Free earth day trees for planting
- * Take and Learn Kits
- * Family Fun Nights (Gamblers Game etc.)
- * Project Learning Days
- * Camp Counselor Training
- * Adventure Day Camp
- * Monthly Community Family Night
- * Annual Achievement Night



Left to right: -Oconto Co. 4-H Dairy Goat Exhibitor - Oconto County 4-H Volunteer Youth Fair Announcer - Adventure Day Camp - Summer Camp Duct Tape meal

In addition to providing support and programming to my local 4-H programs I have also been able to participate on several teams and workgroups to support 4-H at the state and National levels, as well as take on the role as the WI 4-H Program Delivery Project Manager, all of which have led to several professional opportunities including:

- Chair of the WI 4-H Program Quality Youth Thriving Sub-committee
- Member of WI 4-H Youth Thriving Model Evaluation Team
- Representative on WI 4-H Staffing Plan Team
- Co-Chair on the Quality Club Experiences Subcommittee
- Member of the Disability Champions Group
- Creator of the WI 4-H Thrive Guide



Contact:

Aimee Elkins, 4-H Program Educator, Marinette and Oconto Counties
WI 4-H Program Delivery Manager
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OCONTO COUNTY



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OCONTO COUNTY



Mandi Dornfeld
Area Extension
Director –
Marinette, Menominee,
Oconto and Shawano
Counties

Extension's mission is to connect people with the University of Wisconsin. We teach, learn, lead and serve, transforming lives and communities. As you can see by our 2023 annual report, we are working alongside those who live and work in Oconto county to support strong, resilient people and communities.

In 2023, we welcomed two new educators serving in the Agriculture and Human Development and Relationships roles. These educators joined our dedicated and talented team of professionals to expand our reach in Oconto County. We are excited and grateful to be fully staffed in order to continue the mission of Extension and expand the reach of the University. 2024 is starting strong and innovative with both long-term and new programmatic efforts.

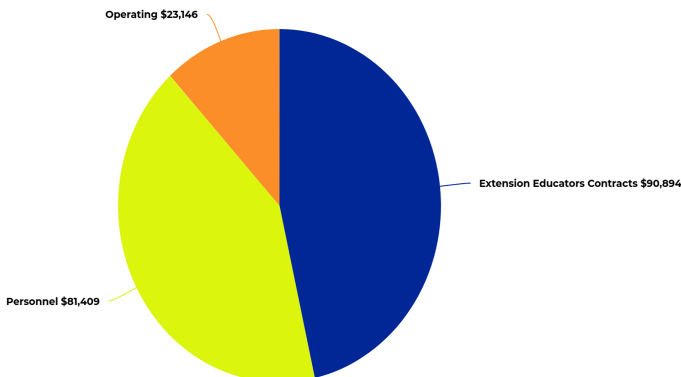
Extension's funding includes a combination of county, state, federal, as well as research/programming funds. During 2023, Oconto County continued the contract with Extension agreeing to co-fund faculty and staff through a flat fee for services. This flat fee covers a portion of each educator's salary and benefits. In addition, Extension also provides resources such as the area director, state specialists, professional development, human resources, onboarding support, as well as technical and programming support to assist our educators in meeting the educational needs of this county.

Our team is grateful for the continued support and look forward to deepening our collaborative efforts.

With gratitude,

Mandi Dornfeld

UW-Extension Expenditures 2023 - \$195,449



Educational Program Areas

Agriculture
Community Development
Human Development & Relationships
4-H Youth Development
FoodWise

Extension Expenditures
Operating Expenses \$23,146
Extension Educator Contracts \$90,894
Personnel \$81,409



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