

WALWORTH COUNTY EXTENSION MONTHLY REPORT



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



WALWORTH COUNTY
— WISCONSIN —



March 2026

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



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Janel Heidelmeier, 4-H Program Educator & Debbie Harris, 4-H Youth Development Educator

- Hosted **New 4-H Family Orientation** (Feb. 4) to acclimate new and recently new community club families to the expectations and opportunities associated with 4-H; offered both youth and adult learning tracks.
- Conducted three of four scheduled **Clover University** events (Jan. 29, Feb. 19, and Mar. 3) offering 23 unique hands-on workshops for 4-Hers related to production animal, food preservation, and a diverse array of arts/crafts and science-related project areas. Total reach was 130 youth.
- Facilitated the **Walworth County 4-H Junior Leaders' Association (JLA) Workshop Night** (Jan. 26) during which 24 teens assembled wooden patio benches and 11 youth completed canvas paintings of a black bear in the woods. Hosted the **JLA Bowling Night** (Feb. 23) at Delavan Lanes for 24 youth.
- Completed the highly competitive **4-H resident camp counselor selection process** and coordinated two of five planned **trainings** (Feb. 26, Mar. 10) for the 25 cabin and resource counselors serving on this year's team. Completed chaperone selection as well, with the first of two trainings happening in late March.
- Engaged 10 second grade CCLC afterschool program participants at Turtle Creek Elementary in the first of a **3-session series** of 4-H workshops. Held March 4, this one featured stained-glass style spring paintings.
- Led a **Soft Pretzel Workshop** on Feb. 17th for 12 4-H Cloverbud members (grades 5K-2). During this session participants mixed, kneaded, and twisted dough which baked into tasty treats.
- Piloted a potential new **4-H Science Lab** program, "The Buzz about Insect Senses," for 3 classes of Williams Bay 2nd graders Jan. 9. Hands-on activities included having students follow a "scent trail" and complete a "sound canister" challenge.
- 4-H Science Lab Programs given since January 1 have included:
 - "Reduced to a Pulp" – 7 classrooms (grades 2-3) at 2 schools (Turtle Creek, Traver)
 - "Owl Encounter" – 9 classrooms (grades 2-5) at 3 schools (Tibbets, West Side, Woods)
 - "Ready-Set-Dough" – 5 classrooms (grade 2-4) at 2 schools (Tibbets, Brookwood Middle School)
 - "Ready-Set-Cinnamon Bread" – 2 classrooms (grade 5) at Brookwood Middle School



The Extension Institute of Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance, build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and afterschool programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

AGRICULTURE - CROPS & SOILS



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Josh Kamps, Crops and Soils Regional Educator

- An educational workshop for farmers, agronomists, and conservation professionals where participants learned about updated research-based nitrogen management considerations and explored strategies to improve crop production profitability and local water quality through fine tuning on-farm nitrogen management. The workshop strengthened collaboration among farmers, agronomists, and conservation professionals, supporting broader adoption of nutrient-management practices that enhance both economic and environmental sustainability in the region.
- A multi-year, multi-location, nitrogen management on-farm study to better understand nitrogen value of manure, biosolids, or decomposing cover crops as nitrogen sources for corn production across the region. Results of this study will help farmers, agronomists, and crop consultants in targeting nitrogen rate recommendations to improve profitability with corn production and reduce the amount of residual nitrogen at risk of leaching into groundwater. The study generated regionally relevant data that improves understanding of how organic nitrogen sources contribute to corn fertility needs.
- Participation in regional winter agronomy meetings alongside farmers and agronomists promotes relationship building, program needs assessment and opens opportunities for new partnerships and collaborations. The goal of this participation is to serve as professional development and a measurement of the relevancy of my Extension education and outreach programming. Stronger relationships with farmers and agronomists led to new collaborations and invitations for future outreach efforts.
- An educational program for farmers seeking restricted use certification to apply pesticides for controlling weeds, pest insects, or plant pathogens that are impacting crop production. Participants learned about using pesticides safely for themselves, employees, and plants and animals within natural



The Extension Agriculture Institute is your connection to the latest University of Wisconsin-Madison research. Our five program areas; Agriculture Water Quality, Crops and Soils, Dairy and Livestock, Farm Management, and Horticulture, are here to educate and respond to the needs of the agriculture community while providing resources that promote economic and environmental sustainability in Wisconsin. We apply research to challenges facing communities and businesses.

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AGRICULTURE - CROPS & SOILS



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- areas nearby to crop fields. As a result, farmers within the region are better positioned to manage crop pests effectively while maintaining compliance with regulations and promoting long-term agricultural and environmental sustainability.
- An educational workshop for farmers, agronomists, and conservation professionals where participants learned about the economics of cover cropping and other soil health practices for crop production. Research based information was shared from on-farm demonstration networks and replicated field trials that studied cover crop species selection, nitrogen rate, cover crop termination timing, crop rotation diversity, and beneficial insect populations to influence crop production decision making and move soil management towards more conservation cropping systems in Southern Wisconsin.



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AGRICULTURE - DAIRY



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Alison Pfau, Bilingual Regional Dairy Educator

- A statewide program promoting humane dairy cow handling practices for dairy cow handlers where the participants will learn to be aware of their own beliefs about working with cows, which affects how they interact with them. They will also learn how to form or maintain good habits, which will make the cows easier to handle and their job smoother.
- A statewide survey for dairy producers, where participants shared detailed records on inputs, management practices, and expenses associated with raising replacement heifers to generate updated benchmarks and highlight cost-saving opportunities, to support more informed decision-making and improve the economic sustainability of dairy operations.
- Developing a certification training called “Milk Quality from the Udder World” in Madison WI on March 18th and 19th. This initiative is specifically designed to equip farm owners, parlor managers, and industry consultants with the advanced communication and training tools necessary to lead high-performance milking teams.
- Developing the Bilingual Forward Farm Safety Toolbox. This hands-on resource is designed to support practical, effective safety training on dairy farms. This pilot event will be on March 16th and 17th at the Research Station in Arlington WI.
- Planning and developing a forage management workshop on March 27 in collaboration with the Crops & soils educator of the region. In this program, we will discuss BMR alternatives and the importance of short corn as a forage alternative, the impact of corn rootworm on the plant, and the new updates about soybean oleic acid on animal nutrition.



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HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



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Amanda Kostman, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- **Rent Smart** - Participants learn how to find and apply for rental housing, understand their responsibilities as a renter, how to communicate effectively with their landlords, and manage housing expenses. Through this, those new to renting are able to increase their ability to find and keep safe affordable housing, thereby increasing their stability and decreasing their reliance on public supports. The goal of this program is to increase participants' ability to meet their financial goals and increase financial capability and/or renter knowledge for long-term financial success.
 - Continued to offer an in-person 6-session course for renters at a local homeless shelter.
 - Conducted four 3-session (2 hours/modules per session) courses for incarcerated individuals at the Walworth County Jail.
 - Conducted one 3-session (2 hours/modules per session) course for young people participating in Youth Build at the College and Career Academy.
 - Continued to offer a virtual 6-session course for renters in Walworth County and beyond.
- Continued to offer 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.
- Continued to offer one-on-one canner gauge testing and education for interested adults, where participants learn best practices in food preservation to ensure safe practices are followed to provide safe food to families.



The Extension Institute of Human Development & Relationships provides the tools Wisconsinites need to thrive as well-rounded, capable individuals and families. We support families in caring for each other in ways that promote growth and understanding. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach effective parents and help families put technology, mindfulness and financial awareness to use.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND RELATIONSHIPS



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Amanda Kostman, Human Development and Relationships Educator

- In partnership with other UW-Extension educators, facilitated a six-session course, Encouraging Financial Conversations, to instruct helping professionals how to engage in positive conversations around money. The six-hour training is geared for helping professionals (case managers, social workers, and other front line staff), but open to anyone! They learn how to help empower clients to achieve their financial goals and manage their money.
- Offered credit and debt and financial record keeping programs with coaching after, to clients of Southeastern Monitoring.
- Conducted a five session (three-hours per session) **Rent Smart Train the Trainer** program designed to help social workers and other community service providers facilitate the Rent Smart program effectively in their own organizations and communities. Professionals and volunteers receive the tools they need to help their clients acquire and keep safe and affordable housing.
- Participated in community workgroups, including CHIP/CHA Group, Anti Human Trafficking Coalition, CNET and Join the Movement.



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HORTICULTURE



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Julie Hill, Horticulture Outreach Specialist

- (Ongoing) A year-long activity/service for residents of Walworth County to provide research-based answers to their horticulture questions. The goal of this effort is to educate individuals of Walworth County so they can implement best practices in their landscapes that will positively affect the environment and their communities.
- A hands-on pruning workshop was held at UW-Whitewater (March 7), in partnership with the UW-W Continuing Education department, Sustainability Manager and Extension Fruit Outreach Statewide Specialist.
- Coming up:
 - *Gardening Small* presentation, March 16, 5:30 p.m., Big Foot High School, hosted by Big Foot Recreation District. For more information and to register, visit: <https://www.bigfootrecreation.org/>
 - *Busy Pollinators at Work* - program for Walworth 4-H Cloverbuds (K-2nd grade), March 19
 - *Beyond Birdfeeders* presentation, March 20, 1:00 p.m., hosted by Aram Library, at their temporary location: 830 E. Geneva St., Suite B, Delavan. For more information: <https://www.aramlibrary.org/site/events/#/events/2UQDFOxJWK/instances/mE9lyfvhlq/>



The UW-Madison's Extension Horticulture Program provides research-based horticulture information to Wisconsinites so they can make gardening decisions that keep their plants healthy while protecting the environment. We provide research- and evidence-based horticulture management education, resources and decision-making tools to home gardeners and commercial horticulture practitioners.

HORTICULTURE



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- Coming up in April:
 - *Gardening With Nosey Neighbors-The Furry & Antlered Kind*, - multiple locations:
 - April 9, 6:00 p.m., East Troy Village Hall, 2015 Energy Dr., hosted by East Troy Parks and Recreation; for more information and to register, visit: <https://easttroywi.gov/programs>
 - April 13, 5:30 p.m., Big Foot High School, hosted by Big Foot Recreation District. For more information and to register, visit: <https://www.bigfootrecreation.org/>
 - April 29, 6:00 p.m. Fontana Public Library, 166 2nd Ave, Geneva Lake, for more information: <https://www.fontana.lib.wi.us/site/events/#/events/Hd3hMm3lhr/instances/kskIOcY4lo/>
- Master Gardeners, certified by UW-Madison Division of Extension, completed 1,668 hours of volunteer service for 27 organizations throughout Walworth County. Activities included educating others, gardening, and administration functions for various boards or committees.



Master Gardeners also complete continuing education hours by attending various programs, garden tours and workshops.

Organizations in Walworth County served by Master Gardeners in 2025: Congdon Gardens, Delavan-Darien School District, East Troy Manor, Fontana Garden Club, Friends of Hillmoor, Geneva Lake Conservancy, Historical Society, Kettle Moraine Land Trust, Kishwaukee Nature Conservancy, Lake Geneva Schools, Lakeland Animal Shelter, Lauderdale Lakes Lake Management District, Matheson Memorial Library, Oakwood Cemetery Association, SMILES, St. Patrick Parish, St. Peter's, Sugar Creek Lutheran Church, The Bridge Food and Diaper Bank, Town of Linn, UW-Extension Walworth County, UW-Whitewater Sustainability Office, Village of Genoa City, Walworth County, Walworth County Master Gardener Association, Yerkes Future Foundation.

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PROFESSIONAL AWARDS



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- Wisconsin Extension Association of Family and Consumer Science Rosalie Powell Financial Management Award for the Walworth County Financial Futures Incentive Program - **Amanda Merchlewitz**
- Wisconsin Association of Extension 4-H Youth Development Professionals and NAE4HYDP Meritorious Service Award - **Debbie Harris**
- Wisconsin Extension Association of Family and Consumer Science Memorial Joan Keup Para-Professional Award - **Maria Nelson**

