



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MARATHON COUNTY

# January 2024 Report

*We teach, learn, lead, and serve,  
connecting people with the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with  
them in transforming lives and communities.*

## **4-H – Positive Youth Development**

**Holly Luerssen, 4-H Program Educator**

**Jasmine Carbajal, 4-H Associate Educator**

- A hands-on educational activity where Marathon County youth in 3rd grade and older learned about using rotary cutters and worked on quilting and sewing skills. The goal of this program was to provide a time and space for youth to work on a project they can take to the 2024 county fair.
- A hands-on educational activity where Marathon County youth in 3rd grade and older made Christmas themed treats. The goal of this activity was for participants to practice using kitchen skills and to try something new.
- 4-H Flake Out is a day-long program with hands-on activities for youth to connect with different project areas in 4-H in order to practice their skills or to learn something new. The goal is to ensure youth have the opportunities to explore, learn, and connect with people, to learn new skills, and to have a sense of belonging.

*“My favorite thing was getting to sew and [learn to] take care of animals because it's something I can use in the future.” – Flake Out Youth Participant*





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## **Agriculture**

**Heather Schlessor, Dairy Agent**

- Developing teaching and marketing materials for the UW-Madison Division of Extension Wisconsin Dairy Reproduction Roadshow, a multi-location in-person series for dairy producers and industry professionals to improve their herd's reproductive performance and increase their economic sustainability.
- Developing a Planning for Emergency Livestock Transportation Response (PELTR) hybrid training in collaboration with Waukesha County Emergency Management and the Humane Animal Welfare Society (HAWS) of Waukesha for area and statewide emergency response personnel to learn about responding to roadside incidents involving livestock trailers. The purpose of this program is to increase the effectiveness of emergency planning and the preparedness of local emergency response agencies.
- A live, on-line meeting series, for farmers and dairy industry professionals, where participants learned the latest research and applications regarding developments in genetic evaluations, feed efficiency research, methane emissions, and dairy cow resiliency. The goal of this effort was to increase knowledge of the latest UW-Madison research on the impacts that genetics plays on dairy cattle. Badger Dairy Insight is a webinar series to provide the latest research-based dairy information to improve animal welfare, breeding and genetic selection, automation and modernization, and nutritional decisions for producers, dairy workers and managers, ag professionals, and educators. In this meeting, Kent Weigel spoke on the role genetics play in farm viability, environmental sustainability, and food safety.

## **FoodWise**

**Mallory McGivern, FoodWise Administrator**

**Michelle Van Krey, Healthy Communities Coordinator**

**Julia Perock, FoodWise Educator**

- Planning with partners in Clark, Marathon, Portage and Wood Counties to build a new platform that directly focuses on food access mapping for those with limited incomes. The goal of this effort is to provide current, reliable food access information for all community stakeholders in Central Wisconsin and the state.
- Shared leadership in the Marathon County Hunger Coalition, where emphasis is placed on expanding healthy food access and developing new projects and partnerships that will empower Marathon County families through education and shared resources. The coalition's goal is to increase access to healthy foods to achieve health equity for all county residents.
- A quarterly nutrition education series in Marathon County utilizing the Feeding for Healthy Eating curriculum for adults with young children as part of the Children's Wisconsin LEAP (Learning Essentials about Parenting) program where they learn about incorporating healthy eating habits into the family routine, including family meals, and eating more fruits and vegetables. The goal of this effort is to encourage healthy eating behaviors at home.



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## Horticulture

Janell Wehr, Horticulture Educator

- Developing informal learning communities utilizing the Horticulture Program's social media for all Wisconsin gardeners, including underserved populations. The goal of this effort is to provide accurate, practical and up-to-date information to the public primarily through the topic hub in order to foster engagement and bolster educational outreach efforts in support of addressing the Horticulture Program objectives.
- A diagnostic service for the general public, where Marathon and Wood County residents' horticultural inquiries are answered through evidence-based resources. This effort is designed to reduce pollution through horticultural product (pesticides and fertilizers) misuse.
- An interview for the WSAW viewing audience where participants learned about upcoming local therapeutic horticulture programming. This effort is designed to support physical, social, and emotional benefits to local residents.
- "Growing new plants from kitchen scraps", a program where local residents learned multiple plant propagation techniques. This effort is designed to support physical, social, and emotional benefits to local residents.

Social isolation, the absence of social connections, is a key indicator of community strength, impacting individual and communal well-being. Strong social ties correlate with better mental and physical health. Socially isolated individuals face heightened risks like depression, anxiety, and poor physical health. According to the Marathon County 2022 LIFE Report, Marathon County residents feel less connected to their communities than in 2017, with the greatest growth of disconnection to organizations (clubs, churches, etc).

In "Growing New Plants from Kitchen Scraps", participants learned propagation techniques while recognizing that nurturing plants in low risk experiments increases indicators of wellbeing and resilience to stress. Participants took home kits with all materials necessary to start multiple experiments at home. Extension partnered with both MCPL-Wausau branch and Woodson YMCA-The Landing to provide this programming; each partner seeks to engage local residents in positive socialization opportunities. Two programs were held at MCPL-Wausau branch with a total of eleven participants. Friends of the Marathon County Public Library paid for the materials for the participants at MCPL-Wausau branch. At the program at The Landing, 13 participants aged over 55 participated.

## Natural Resources

Kris Tiles, NRI Program Manager

Anna James, Regional Natural Resources Educator

- A facilitated discussion for producers and conservation professionals in the Springbrook and Upper Eau Claire River watersheds where participants will learn about the Producer-Led Watershed Protection Grant Program. The goal of this meeting is for producers to identify conservation related concerns, local stakeholders, and engagement/commitment in order to determine if forming a producer-led watershed protection group is in the best interest of the environment and community members.



- A collaborative planning effort between Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Petenwell and Castle Rock Stewards (PACRS) to gather all citizen led water protection and restoration groups in the greater Wisconsin River basin area. The goal of this effort is to increase collaboration amongst the groups, identify goals and initiatives for improving water quality, and assess community needs.
- A survey of agencies and organizations that support farmer-led watershed groups in Wisconsin was conducted to better understand how these groups are functioning and the nature of support they receive from their partners. Results of the survey will be used to inform decisions about what types of support are most beneficial and most needed by the farmer-led groups.

## ***Additional Extension Outreach Programming Occurring in Marathon County***

- Program planning for Dean's Innovation Grant award to provide well water testing to farmers with employee housing to test water quality for underserved audiences. The goal of this program is to incentivize water testing for farms to ensure drinking water is safe for human consumption.
- A 7-session course, Planning AHEAD 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.
- A 6-session wellness series (WeCOPE) for child care providers where they learned different strategies that support awareness of mind-body connection. The goal of this effort is to offer skills to decrease stress and increase positive emotions of participants.

## ***Upcoming Programs***

- **4-H Programming** – Information at [marathon.extension.wisc.edu/projects/programs/](https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/projects/programs/)
- **Horticultural Programs** – Information at <https://marathon.extension.wisc.edu/horticulture/programs/>

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