



Agriculture

Katie Wantoch | *Associate Professor and Agriculture Agent, Specializing in Economic Development*

The annual Western WI Ag Lenders Conference was held on January 6, 2022. Approximately 110 agriculture lenders, professionals, and educators attended the daylong conference that was offered both in-person and via Zoom by UW Extension educators and support colleague. One virtual participant noted, "I really liked the hybrid option for the conference this year (in-person and virtual). The virtual was well done - nice being able to see people at the conference via "cam video" plus the presenters themselves - much nicer than just showing slides on the screen... Made it feel like when I attend in person..."

Participants found the presentations more than useful (average 4.2, Likert scale 1-poor and 5-excellent) and the speakers to be very effective (average 4.1, same scale). One commented, "Thanks for your dedication in continuing to present this conference. Good job on running this hybrid virtual/in person conference. It was well presented." As a result of attending this program, participants plan to use something that they learned to help a client make a decision about a business opportunity or new enterprise (average 5.8, Likert scale 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree), including carbon markets/credit information, market trends, and 2022 outlooks.

I have chaired this annual conference since 2011. In total, over 1,500 participants have attended and increased their knowledge of important farm management and timely agricultural topics at the beginning of the new year.

- An annual regional conference for ag professionals and educators, where attendees gained an awareness of the outlook for commodity prices. This conference was designed to increase their knowledge when advising their farm clientele in preparing for the upcoming year.
- A presentation for Chippewa Valley Ag Conference participants, where farmers learned ten things that can help them get started on their farm succession plan, have intentional conversations around farm succession, and develop future plans for the farm in order to help them be successful in their business transition.
- A podcast series, AgriVision, for farmers and ag professionals, where UW Extension educators answer Farm Management questions and share knowledge and expertise on how farmers can improve their farm management skills.
- A monthly column in WI Agriculturist magazine for farmers and ag professionals, where readers learn about farm management and available Extension resources. The purpose of this effort is to improve farm business decision-making.
- Updating and adapting a financial management curriculum for beginning, female, and other farmers into a more relevant format for use in-person, stand-alone educational videos, and an on-line course. This curriculum will assist farmers in identifying strengths and weaknesses of their business to assist them in making decisions that will improve their farm profitability.

Community Development

Addison Vang | *Community Development Educator*

It's been a great start to the new year. The DATCP Specialty Crop Block Grant was awarded to Chippewa Valley Produce, LLC to support Western Wisconsin underserved farmers. The grant will support the development of business management and capacity building for these underserved farmers. The Eau Claire Area Hmong Association Assistance, Black and Brown Womyn Power, and DATCP have been identified as partners.

I am continuing to do outreach to all three counties (Dunn, Eau Claire, and Chippewa) I serve. This month, I have been making connections with organizations dealing with housing issues in the Chippewa Valley.

- Planning meetings with the executive leadership of the nonprofit Literacy Chippewa Valley during which organizational needs are diagnosed and a strategic planning process will be designed. The purpose of this effort is to help the organization identify a strategic direction in order to more effectively use its resources to address regional literacy needs.
- Planning a statewide conference to support a Hmong economic development summit. The goal is to build a network of underrepresented entrepreneurs and business owners to learn and support one another.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
DUNN COUNTY

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Horticulture

Margaret Murphy | *Horticulture Outreach Specialist*

Horticulture inquiries - So far this year, I have received questions on insects in the home, apple tree pruning and arborvitaes. In 2021, I had recorded a minimum of 300 horticulture contacts. Of these initial contacts in 2021 45% were made by phone. Email was the next frequent way folks reached out for horticulture advice. This was similar to inquiries that came specifically from Dunn County.

Overall, from the three counties I serve, tree related questions accounted for the majority of the recorded inquiries (21%). In Dunn County, horticulture questions spanned a wide range with no one particular topic standing out; though, questions on trees, landscaping and plant ID were the most common.

2021 Master Gardener Mentorship Program - I reviewed the feedback from new Master Gardener volunteers who participated in our 2021 Mentorship program pilot. Results showed that 86% of survey respondents found that the mentorship had helped them become better familiar with their local Master Gardener Program. The same amount also stated that the mentorship helped facilitate their involvement in volunteer service. This is good news as one of the primary objectives of the mentorship program was to help acclimate new volunteers and get them quickly involved with local Master Gardener activities as this has been shown to help with volunteer retention.

Developing new educational opportunities - I serve on a committee that is developing a series of horticulture mini webinars for the 2022 growing season. The webinars are called mini because they last approximately 30 minutes including Q&As. The webinars are free. The first round focuses on fruit and starts at the end of February. For more information visit <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/mini-webinars-for-gardeners/>.

Professional development - I attended the Toward Harmony with Nature Conference and found great inspiration while listening to the keynote, Dr. Douglas Tallamy, share how homeowners can incorporate wildlife conservation into their yard no matter how small the space. We can garden in ways that support native ecosystems and support pollinators, birds etc. Other speakers at the conference spoke on incorporating native species in your yard for both ecosystem health and year-round interest, lawn alternatives to KY bluegrass and fescue and utilizing rain gardens.

Health and Well-Being

Sandy Tarter | *FoodWise Coordinator*

Nancy Fastner | *FoodWise Educator*

Joy Weisner | *FoodWise Educator*

We are pleased to announce the hiring of a new Nutrition Educator, Jael Martinez Wolf. Jael comes to us with a Masters in Environmental Science and Mgmt. She has a passion for being involved in our community and has a wealth of experience in diverse outreach both US and abroad. Locally, Jael has taught classes in Augusta, Altoona, and with our local EC County Master Gardeners. She is fluent in Spanish and met criteria as a Bilingual Nutrition Educator. Jael's first day will be February 21st.

Nancy has been planning upcoming virtual classes with Dunn and Chippewa County WIC participants. This virtual format continues to be a strong way in connecting with our families and provides greater convenience being able to stay at home with little ones.

FoodWise continues to support the virtual Tues/Thurs StrongBodies series that started in January with leading, providing nutrition lessons, and setting up speakers.

Sandy completed end of year impact reports for each of the counties. This report will be submitted to our annual Extension County Board Report. She is also beginning the planning process for FY23 by updating our 3-yr action plan and equity reflection.



- A virtual nutrition education planning session in collaboration with the Dunn and Chippewa County Women Infant & Children (WIC). The goal of this effort is to design a series of lessons to help parents of young children (WIC participants) share and discuss ways to make healthy snacks and create mealtime harmony.
- Strategic planning meetings with the Health Dunn Right- Chronic Disease Prevention Action Team during which annual goals and objectives were reviewed. The purpose of this effort is for the team to identify a strategic direction in order to more effectively guide its resources in meeting goals and objectives during the upcoming year.

Human Development and Relationships

Stephanie Hintz | *Human Development and Relationships Educator*

This month programming and activities have been going swimmingly. However, I'd like to use this space to make a bittersweet announcement. I have officially submitted my letter of resignation and my last day will be April 1st. This was an extremely difficult decision to make because I love this county, this community, Extension, my colleagues, and the area we work, live, and play. I am moving to San Diego with my best friend who lives two blocks from the beach. Many people ask if I have a position lined up and the answer is not yet. I am taking a leap of faith to be warm all year long (: In the meantime, I will use the next two months to sunset, transition, button up the programs, activities, and initiatives I have been working on over the last 5 years. I will be thrilled to share more during the next CRTS meeting.

- A 4-hour online class for parents in a legal court case for divorce, placement change, child support or paternity, where they learn about the effects of family transitions on children and how parents can minimize problems for their children through cooperative co-parenting strategies.
- A weekly virtual drop-in session for participants who have taken a resiliency skill building focused class, workshop, or series with Extension (i.e. WeCope, Farm Stress, etc.) and general community members interested in self-care, where participants learn skills such as deep breathing, guided imagery, values exercises, gratitude meditations, etc.. The purpose of these sessions was to reduce stress and increase self-awareness, and help sustain learnings and practices learned in previous Extension educational opportunities.

Positive Youth Development

Luisa Gerasimo | *4-H Program Educator*

What is happening in 4-H land right now, in the depths of winter? Planning and more planning for spring and summer! Summer camp with Clark, Eau Claire and Dunn 4-H at Kamp Kenwood in early June involves a lot of meetings especially for marketing, and recruitment of counselors and adult volunteers (and we need to find a good camp cook!). The Tri-County Performing Arts Festival goes live at Cadott Highschool at the end of February - so we are busy taking applications to perform and lining up volunteers to help that day go smoothly. UW-Stout art educators are back to teach 6 art classes via Zoom this spring. Stout is recruiting the student teachers and planning curriculum for classes that start in March and will end with an in person student art show at the university in April. I've continued to offer hands-on 4-H activities to the Boys and Girls Club that meets at River Heights Elementary and am enjoying spending time with these energetic and enthusiastic youngsters.

Eau Claire and Dunn are teaming up to offer a Middle School Leadership Day coming up March 19th at Beaver Creek Reserve - it will focus on interactive games and learning about the many ways to lead. The Dunn County Leaders Council has begun to work on the 2022 Dunn County Plat Book to be sure it is ready to go by hunting season. And of course, our 4-H clubs continue to meet, do fun educational activities, and offer their services to our community. In January we said goodbye to the Countyliners 4-H Club, which had gotten too small during the pandemic, and we said HELLO to Building Bridges. The youth in the Hmong after school club voted to keep going after school is out by forming a 4-H club - some of the youth are already talking about what projects they want to take to the county fair!

- Ongoing support for an afterschool club for Hmong youth which builds community through 4-H activities, mindfulness moments, and goal setting activities. The goal of this effort is to support youth mental health and to keep youth connected to their peers and caring professionals.



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- A twice a month set of activities for children grades 1-4 where they participate in 4-H Cloverbud activities at a Boys and Girls Club. This program promotes participation in area 4-H to a diverse audience.

The Boys & Girls Club in Menomonie really enjoyed having 4-H join our programming. Our members enjoyed learning about the Jack in the Beanstalk story through their drawings and elaborate movements to accompany the story. They were all excited to use their body to animate the story. They were engaged the entirety of the programming because of the involvement they were offered during the lesson. Thanks again for joining us!

-Program Coordinator for Boys and Girls Club



Three elementary age youth show off egg models showing the development of chicken embryos.

Support

Michelle Bachand | Support Specialist

The new year kicked off to a quick start with the annual Western WI Ag Lenders Conference on January 6th. I assisted with the event by co-piloting the virtual side of the conference, recording the presentations, uploading the videos to a YouTube playlist, and compiling the evaluations.

Some of the other activities I worked on this month include:

- The editing and captioning of 7 videos for the Farm Pulse Curriculum and 2 AgriVision podcast episodes.
- Logistical preparations for 6 Pesticide Application Training sessions.
- Collaborating with 4-H Educators during the planning stages of the upcoming virtual Art U series and the Tri-County Performance Festival.
- Attended a very exciting refresher training on pivot tables.
- Adding protection to 2 Agriculture financial Excel workbooks to prevent formula and formatting changes.

Area Extension Director

Catherine Emmanuelle | Area Extension Director – Chippewa, Dunn, & Eau Claire Counties

I was able to be a part of the final interviews for our FoodWise educator position that will be based in Eau Claire, however it will serve Chippewa and Dunn Counties as well. Sandy Tarter will be the supervisor for this position. An offer was extended and accepted by Ms. Jael Wolf-Martinez. I am really excited to have our first bi-lingual FoodWise educator join our Extension family and serve in our communities.

There are state changes to be aware of. The first is that we have a new system president, Mr. Jay Rothman. The system president oversees all of the chancellors as one of their many responsibilities. Our dean is going to be building a relationship with Mr. Rothman and sharing the value of Extension and our partnership with Wisconsin counties. The second update is that our Chancellor, Dr. Becky Blank, will be joining Northwestern University as their president (and first female leader) this year. Dr. Blank has been an incredible supporter of Extension (her parents were county Extension educators). I will miss having her as our champion and wish her the best of luck. You can read more about her announcement in a letter from her here: <https://chancellor.wisc.edu/blog/some-personal-news/>. There is now a search committee for the new chancellor, and you can read more about the search here: <https://chancellorsearch.wisc.edu>. The Chair of the Chancellor's Search & Screen Committee shared, "The input of campus stakeholders is extremely important to the search process, and will carry a lot of weight as the committee meets with candidates and deliberates on this decision. We encourage all faculty, staff, and students, as well as members of the broader Madison community, to attend and provide us with their thoughts about what the ideal candidate will bring to the position." – Regent Vice President Karen Walsh



What's Next

- 4-H Tri-County Performing Arts Festival, March 5th
- Middle School Leadership and Games Day, March 19th
 - A fun day for Middle Schoolers in Dunn and Eau Claire Counties. Join for fun games and activities that will help you think about different kinds of leadership.
- Art U, Mondays in March & April
 - A series of 6 art classes delivered primarily in the virtual world! This series is a collaboration between A.I.M. at UW-Stout and 4-H in Chippewa, Dunn, and Eau Claire Counties. The classes will be taught by Art Education students.

- Private Pesticide Applicator Training:

DATE:	TIME:	TRAINING TYPE:	CAPACITY:	PLACE:
Tues, Feb 15	9:30am	Live training	25	Dean & Sue's, Menomonie
Mon, Feb 21	9:30am	Live training	25	Dean & Sue's, Menomonie
Tues, Mar 15	9:00am	Webinar viewing	20	Government Center, Rm 60
Tues, Apr 5	9:00am	Webinar viewing	20	Government Center, Rm 60