



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
WAUPACA COUNTY

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Extension Waupaca County

Extension Impact: Education Makes a Difference

Strengthening Communities with University Resources

By Chris Viau, Area Extension Director for Outagamie, Winnebago & Waupaca Counties

Supporting communities has always been part of Extension's mission. This edition of our Extension Impact highlights specific examples of how Extension Educators engage with a wide variety of partners to meet existing and emerging needs.

The Waupaca County 4-H Program provides opportunities for youth and adults to gain leadership and communication skills that can be applied in diverse ways within their community. Youth are provided opportunities to contribute through service, completing hours of activities that impact those around them.

Community Development programs utilize statewide resources and expertise to provide customized learning for existing and potential organizations. These outcomes help them to maintain the integrity of their mission so they can focus on helping those around them.

The FoodWise team utilizes federal grand funds to provide nutrition education to audiences that have a majority of individuals are eligible for nutrition assistance. Direct education is core to what they do, but the team also has active membership in community coalitions focused on improving access to healthy food and active living for all Waupaca County residents.

Human Development and Relationships programs focus on those who are transitioning to new life stages and their families who are supporting them through changes. Though some unexpected challenges were encountered due to extended staff leave in 2023, conversations with partners have continued with implementation in the coming months.

Please read about some programs our team has been part of in the past few months. I encourage you to reach out to any of the team or myself if you would like to learn more about a specific program or if you have comments or suggestions to share.

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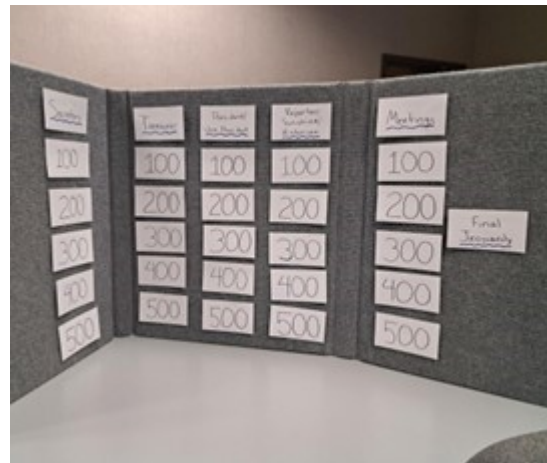
Twenty-five Youth Trained for Leadership Roles

By Penny Tank, UW-Madison Extension 4-H Educator for Waupaca County

One of the requirements to be a 4-H club in Wisconsin is to have youth involved in leadership and decision-making. Each year, youth of all ages are elected to officer leadership roles within the 18 4-H clubs in Waupaca County. With this opportunity comes excitement, nervousness, responsibility, and new experiences for building life skills. With this also comes the need for continued training and support for club officers.

Twenty-five youth attended Officer Training with 3 adults and 2 youth teaching. The officers ranged in age from kindergarten to high school. Training started with two large group activities. Tank created a Connect 4 Person Bingo for members to meet others and an Officer Jeopardy game. Individual workshops were then held for each office. Tank led the reporter/historian/sunshine portion of training and taught 11 youth about submitting press releases, writing captions for photos, compiling a scrapbook, addressing an envelope and other items.

Of the evaluations completed (n=18), all participants thought the training was helpful or very helpful. When asked on the evaluations, what is one thing they especially liked, answers included: high level of detail – clearly outlined, how informative it was about every aspect, Jeopardy game, having the child play a game to warm up to the training groups, and making cards. One of the parents added, “as a parent, I thought it went really well and informative, fun and educational.”



Extension Collaborates with Waupaca County Hunger Network to Assemble Special Holiday Food Bundles

By Christi Gabriliska, UW-Madison Extension FoodWise Coordinator for Calumet, Outagamie, Winnebago & Waupaca Counties

Hailee Paul, UW-Madison Extension FoodWise Educator for Waupaca County

This was the third year the Waupaca County Hunger Network, a subcommittee of the Living the Waupaca Way Coalition, held a food drive to assemble special holiday food bundles for Thanksgiving. Amy Ebert, Christi Gabriliska, and Hailee Paul, Extension staff, are members of both the Hunger Network and Living the Waupaca Way, and contributed to the coordination of this effort. After delivering 101 food bundles in 2021, 146 bundles in 2022, the network set out to collect enough food for 200 families in 2023. This year's collection and distribution of the food bundles was a true community collaboration.

Throughout October and early November the Extension office stored and kept track of incoming donated food including stuffing, canned vegetables, canned fruit, corn bread, pie filling, and gravy that would accompany a turkey to be assembled into one big food bundle. Additionally this year, FoodWise reached out to local growers

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seeking interest in donations of fresh produce and received a gracious response. Bacco's Produce, Gabriliska Family Farm & Pumpkin Patch, Christensen's Orchard and vendors from the Waupaca Farmers Market, collectively offered squash, potatoes, garlic and apples. Funds were also received to purchase potatoes and onions for each bundle through a Kwik Trip Kares donation. Aluminum baking pans for casseroles and turkeys were paired with each bundle that were purchased through a Thrivent Community Impact grant.



Nominations to receive the food bundles were collected through an online form that was distributed to Waupaca County employees, the Waupaca Public Library, all of



Living the Waupaca Way Coalition and its subcommittee's members, Head Start, and the public schools. There was no eligibility for nominations, as the network feels strongly about reaching anyone who may be in need of a little extra something special. According to the ALICE report for Waupaca County, in 2018 there were about 2,300 families living in poverty, and 4,100 families were reported to be ALICE households. ALICE is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed — households that earn more than the Federal Poverty Level, but less than the basic cost of living for the county (the ALICE Threshold). Essentially, these families are one small financial crisis away from poverty. This is strongly why the Waupaca County Hunger Network has no eligibility requirements for the food bundles.

The week before Thanksgiving 200 food bundles were assembled at the Extension office by a team of Hunger Network volunteers and all of the nominators picked up and delivered their bundles to their nominees. A nominator shared that one of their families said "THANK YOU! We have been struggling as a result of inflation." and another family shared "We have two families living in one house, we have taken in a family of 10 who are homeless. Thank you!"

Community Development Reflections

By Amy Ebert, UW-Madison Extension Community Development Educator for Waupaca County

December marks my eighth month as a limited-term, part-time Community Development Educator with Extension Waupaca County. I find myself reflecting on an experience that has been both diverse and rewarding. While my primary program focus is centered on Organizational and Leadership Development (ORGLD), my work has extended into other program areas within the Community Development Institute.

At its core, the ORGLD program aims to contribute to the development of strong and thriving communities, helping them realize their full potential. This is accomplished through a holistic framework that focuses on three

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main elements: Organizations, Leadership, and Belonging. Strengthening these elements promotes civic engagement, resulting in a range of benefits, from economic vitality to community resilience and improved overall wellbeing.

In this role, I have shared Extension resources with more than 65 community members, developed and distributed an interest survey to 46 members of the Wisconsin Towns Association Waupaca County Unit, and consulted more than five leaders and community members on community engagement and networking strategies. Additionally, I co-delivered two nonprofit startup workshops and provided guidance to two organizations on their nonprofit applications.

What stands out to me the most in this role is the continuous learning. Whether it's gaining insights from community leaders about available resources and issues or collaborating with colleagues across the state, each experience has been a valuable lesson.

Looking ahead, I have been granted the opportunity to facilitate a visioning session for a local organization. I am eager to help this group recognize their shared values, purposes, and goals, ultimately increasing their organizational capacity.

Overall, this chapter of my career has been both humbling and rewarding and has aligned perfectly with my ethos of my work: to help others overcome barriers to achieving their full potential.



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