



**Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
WAUPACA COUNTY

Fall 2025

Extension Waupaca County

# Extension Impact: Education Makes a Difference

## 4-H Learning Journey to Washington D.C

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

Thanks to a grant from Herb Kohl Philanthropies, 37 youth ages 13-17 and 4 adults were able to have an experience of a lifetime in Washington D.C. Sixteen youth from Waupaca County joined with 4-H members from Marinette, Oconto, and Shawano Counties for this Learning Journey. The 4-H Educator from Oconto County asked Penny if Waupaca County would be willing to partner and soon after the grant was received and we were in the planning stages! The youth only had to pay a minimal amount for group t-shirts, bus to the Milwaukee Airport, and snacks. The rest of the experience (flight, lodging, meals, entrance fees, and a coach bus in DC) was covered by the grant from Herb Kohl Philanthropies.

### The program had the following objectives:

- Increase knowledge and understanding of America's government
- Build awareness of the many steps taken to gain U.S. history
- Further develop skills in leadership and personal expression of values
- Increase awareness of self in relationship to other group members

Some of the stops included the United States Capitol Building, Library of Congress, Presidential and War Memorials, Arlington National Cemetery, White House, Washington Monument, and Smithsonian Museums. A tour guide was with us on the bus and at the stops adding to the educational value of each experience.



*(Continued on page #2)*

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## In This Issue

**Strategic Planning  
Builds Organizational  
Alignment and Capacity**

2

**Helping Older Adults  
Outsmart Scammers**

3

**FoodWise Supports  
Implementation of a Snack  
Pantry at Clintonville  
Elementary**

3

Evaluation data showed that:

- ⇒ 85% of participants made friends with people they did not know before
- ⇒ 84% of participants appreciate others differences and talents
- ⇒ 70% of participants increased their knowledge of leadership skills to apply back home
- ⇒ 100% of participants increased their knowledge and understanding of America's Government and History

When asked the most important thing they learned, responses included:

1. The history behind all of the places and how genuinely important they are and how important it is to remember.
2. To be more aware of what happens around me.
3. The importance of remembering the people who fought for our country and all the innocent lives that were taken.
4. To make new friends.



## Strategic Planning Builds Organizational Alignment and Capacity

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

The Waupaca Historical Society (WHS) continued to make progress on its strategic plan during a July 2025 board retreat. Building on the foundation laid last fall and winter, when the board revisited their mission and created a vision statement, this retreat focused on moving from vision to action. To prepare, Amy co-created the agenda with the Executive Director and facilitated the day's activities.

As part of the planning process Amy recommended, the group completed two surveys: a community survey to capture external perspectives and a **SWOC (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges) survey** among board members. These intentional steps provided a mix of external voices and board perspectives to guide decision-making.

During the retreat, ten board members reviewed survey results, identified common themes, and reached consensus on their top **three strategic goals**. One board member described what they found most valuable: "Conversations and open discussion; Amy did a great job guiding conversations."

To move from goals to action, Amy introduced the **PATI framework**, which stands for Purpose, Assessment, Tactics, and Implementation. Unlike traditional action planning tools, PATI begins by clarifying the purpose of the goal, which builds buy-in and motivation. From there, the group assesses barriers and helpers, then develops tactics informed by that assessment before moving into implementation. Board members embraced the tool and began developing an action plan for their first goal. Plans for the remaining goals, along with a timeline and assigned responsibilities, will be completed in the next session.



Completing the actions plans will finalize the updated strategic plan. By intentionally sequencing surveys, facilitated discussions, and action planning, the process has been both ambitious and manageable. With Extension's support, the board is aligning around shared priorities and building the tools to carry them out, which strengthens their ability to preserve and share local history for the community.

## Helping Older Adults Outsmart Scammers

*By Alicia Utke, UW-Madison Extension Human Development and Relationships Educator for Waupaca County*

Alicia Utke, Human Development and Relationships Educator with U.W. Madison Extension Waupaca County, partnered with local law enforcement and community organizations to deliver scam prevention programs for older adults. Fraudulent phone calls, phishing attempts, and “grandparent” scams are on the rise, threatening the financial security and peace of mind of older people. During the month of January alone, more than \$54,000 in losses to scams was reported to the City of Waupaca Police Department, demonstrating how deeply these crimes affect local residents.

Working with the Waupaca, New London, and Weyauwega Police Departments, along with local senior centers, parks and recreation departments, and community venues, Alicia hosted sessions where participants learned how to recognize the warning signs of scams, respond safely, and connect with trusted resources. Each attendee received a resource guide created by Waupaca County Adult Protective Services. These connections not only increased confidence but also built stronger community ties, giving participants trusted sources to verify suspicious activity.

In total, more than 120 older adults across Waupaca County took part in these programs. Sessions were hosted in multiple communities, including Waupaca, New London, and Weyauwega, to ensure residents in both larger towns and smaller rural areas had access to timely and practical scam prevention education.

By bringing locally relevant examples of scams directly into the community, U.W. Extension is helping older adults safeguard their finances, maintain independence, and feel more connected. This work will continue throughout the county this fall, with plans to expand into new topics such as online safety, digital privacy, and emerging AI scams.

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## FoodWise Supports Implementation of a Snack Pantry at Clintonville Elementary

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

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

Over the course of the last six years, nutrition educator Hailee Paul has been providing nutrition lessons to Clintonville Elementary second grade students. Guidelines to be eligible for nutrition education in schools through FoodWise programming is that 50% or more of the students attending are utilizing or qualifying for the Free or Reduced Meal Program. Clintonville Elementary historically hovers around 65%.

Building relationships with teachers and understanding the demographics of the school community has been a large objective of the Waupaca County’s FoodWise staff. Through conversation and

*(Continued on page 4)*



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(Continued from page 3)

continuous connection, Hailee was approached by a second-grade teacher to help the school provide more for their students. With some brainstorming the two of them created the vision of a snack pantry within the school.

This snack pantry will be stocked throughout the year with community donations, small grants and support of the district food service. It will operate out of an old office that has been rearranged to host shelving and a refrigerator that will hold stock of snacks. From there, teachers will be able to fill baskets to bring into their classroom to have when a child expresses their need for nourishment. When baskets are depleted, staff will be able to replenish from the stockroom.

FoodWise funds were used to purchase baskets for each classroom in the building. Be Well Waupaca County donated the refrigerator for operations of this pantry with FoodWise staff's involvement and belonging to the coalition, in which one of their community initiatives is Access: improve access and ease of use to community resources that empower community members to achieve optimal health and well-being.



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