



This monthly summary report highlights a few of the programs and projects that Extension Educators in Dane County are currently working on as well as staffing updates and upcoming events.

Agriculture

- A conference for organic vegetable growers where they learned about crop production and farm management practices in order to improve the viability of small farms serving direct markets.
- A series of training sessions for diversified organic vegetable farmers where they learn about labor management techniques to improve employee satisfaction and retention on small-scale vegetable farms.
- Planning for the 2022 Organic Vegetable Production Conference. This producer-initiated conference is designed for advanced growers and attracts participants from throughout the Midwest and beyond.
- An on-farm research project that will study the use of living aisles and no-till planting strips to mitigate the impacts of intense rain events. The results of this study will be used by diversified vegetable producers to improve the productivity of their organic vegetable farms while reducing soil erosion and effects on water quality.
- Chelsea Zegler had two articles published in January:
 - [On-Farm Monitoring Informs Management Keeping Phosphorous in Place](#)
 - [Avoid Manure Over Application to Reduce Runoff](#)

Community Development

- Planning retreat for Southwest Madison Action Coalition where participants identified strategic priorities for 2022, developed an organizational structure, and made personal commitments to accomplish priority actions. Extension role was to design and facilitate the meeting and provide leadership coaching to this emerging organization.
- Recruited participants and assisted in facilitation for a program on Business Improvement Districts (BID), hosted by Community Economic Development Specialist William Ryan, where guest speakers from Ithaca, New York shared their experiences of improving their downtown business district through a BID. Town and Village officials, economic development specialists, and Extension Educators learned about policy and public engagement opportunities for downtown growth and enhancement
- A monthly meeting with community garden partners to address pressing issues related to community gardening in Madison and Dane County to improve and increase food growing opportunities for residents.
- A monthly meeting with food council members where to address issues related to the food system in Madison and Dane County to strengthen and support the local food system.
- A monthly meeting with food systems partners where we address pressing issues related to regional agriculture and food sovereignty in order to increase land and market opportunities for local growers.
- A weekly meeting with local food policy council leadership where we address issues for the two food councils to take up to make policy and planning recommendations to improve and strengthen the local food system.
- Planning for a produce incentive program for FoodShare participants in collaboration with City of Madison, Public Health Madison Dane County, Community Action Coalition, and Willy Street Grocery Co-op. The goal is to improve access so that more people can receive more healthy food, which also supports local growers.
- Planning for a series of webinars for food entrepreneurs designed to equip them with the skills and knowledge for operating successful food business enterprises.

Health and Wellbeing

- Teaching virtual FoodWise lessons in 9 classrooms at Frank Allis and Hawthorne Elementary Schools.
- Recruiting for the next 9 week virtual nutrition education series, (Eating Smart Being Active) offered to Dane County SNAP eligible residents where they learn healthy lifestyle choices, food preparation, food safety, food resource management and physical activity. The goal is to improve healthy eating and physical activity habits for families.
- Monthly sessions and training for clinical pediatricians that describes FoodWise school nutrition programs and

policies that mitigate food insecurity among children from low-income families, and provides resources to expand pediatricians' understanding of food insecurity among their patient population. The purpose of this effort is to connect clinical pediatricians and their patients with the resources Dane County FoodWise offers.

- A partnership focused on understanding the feasibility of providing healthy, minimally processed fruits and vegetables for Early Care and Education (ECE) sites to incorporate into their meal and snack programs as a way to improve food access for children from low-income families. This group of partners coordinated a 2021 pilot program that distributed produce to families through Early Care and Education (ECE) sites and seeks to build on the lessons learned to find a way to sustain these efforts long-term and significantly impact the ability of ECE sites to access high quality, affordable produce.

Human Development & Relationships

- The [2022 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance](#) site opened on January 31 at the South Madison UW Partnership space on South Park Street in Madison. Residents are able to make their own appointments online or can call the Extension office to schedule an appointment.
- A homebuyer readiness program for low income families who were denied access into the Habitat For Humanity Homeownership program. We use financial education workshops and coaching to help the families overcome barriers to ultimately be accepted into the program.
- Individual coaching for vulnerable low income families where participants gain valuable knowledge and skills needed to manage their finances in a very tough financial situation. This effort is designed to enhance the participants' ability to reach a financial goal.

Horticulture

- A session of an online series ("Green Thumb Gardening") for adults where they learned how to best start seeds (indoors or outdoors) and grow healthy seedlings to be transplanted using proper media, media temperature, water and lighting. The class allows the audience to gain greater success in seed starting and maintaining healthy, robust seedlings that perform better in the garden and lead to better productivity and harvest of food crops.
- A session of an online series ("Green Thumb Gardening") for adults where they learned about integrated pest management strategies, species selection, and organic techniques. The goal is to enable participants to more successfully grow vegetable crops and increase harvest potential while protecting the environment.
- An online class for a garden club where members learned about selecting and successfully growing annual and perennial vines to increase the value of their home landscape and support birds and pollinators.
- An online class for Olbrich Botanical Garden's Education Series participants where they learned how to select, grow, and propagate houseplants. The goal of this program is to increase houseplant use which is shown to elevate mood and is connected with greater workplace productivity.
- Planning for a virtual Community Garden Summit in collaboration with community garden coordinating partners and public library staff. The goal is to teach participants food gardening and community building skills, so that community gardens will have sustained success and will provide food access and community for residents.
- A monthly meeting with the Dane County Tree board to address community forestry issues and protect trees as a valued community resource.

Natural Resources

- Michelle Probst's funding application for a summer intern to assist with the development of an online compost course has been funded and recruitment will begin soon.
- A Water Action Volunteers (WAV) webinar where participants learned how we use volunteer data for real-world projects to create a greater connection with volunteers' data and the people who are actively using it.
- A website for members of the Wisconsin Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Partnership where participants can find information and tools to implement the Wisconsin AIS Management Plan. The goal of this effort is to reduce the spread of invasive species in the state's waterways.
- A meeting of Dane County Departments where participants discussed PFAS issues to better collaborate and address PFAS issues.

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- A meeting with City of Madison Departments where participants discussed an inclusive public engagement strategy to inform community members about PFAS issues in Madison.
 - Technical assistance to a local community consultant, using the Wisconsin Geological & Natural History Survey groundwater flow model data to design and locate a new municipal well. The goal is to ensure the provision of sustainable drinking water to the public.

4-H & Positive Youth Development

- Support and coaching for adult volunteers supporting the 4-H Community Club program.
- Monthly Youth in Government (YGP) meeting where student representatives participated in community building activities and engaged in discussion on current topics. The youth are working on the development of a short video to encourage residents to get involved in county government.
- A series of meetings for a committee of high school youth (By Youth For Youth) where they learn about County and City programs for youth, and identify issues and funding priorities to be supported by County and City grants. The purpose of this effort is to provide an opportunity for youth to identify and support with funding, projects developed and implemented by youth to serve youth.
- A selection process for 8th-12th grade youth to lead community study and engagement efforts for the development of a new teen center in the King James neighborhood. The purpose of this effort is to engage youth in hands-on learning about asset mapping, photo voice, and healthy community design efforts.
- Ongoing facilitation support for 4-H STEAM Project volunteers, providing them with resources and strategies to help them develop a plan of action and make sure youth have authentic leadership roles in the project. Authentic youth leadership creates a sense of belonging and strengthens local youth programming.
- Virtual training for 4-H youth and families, where they learn how to connect 4-H education opportunities and fair entries. Through this training, youth gain an understanding of how to share what they have learned in a project area with the community through fair exhibits. (Properly Picking 4-H Projects)
- Virtual trainings for youth members involved in the Cat, Cavy, Poultry and Rabbit project areas where youth are provided leadership opportunities as presenters and others gain information related to animal health and behaviors. In addition to educating youth about the various animal species, the purpose of these training opportunities are to build life skills related to public speaking in youth so they can become confident leaders.
- Facilitation support for members of the 4-H photography project to help them develop a plan of action. The goal is to develop a series of educational opportunities, increase youth participation, youth leadership opportunities, and to advance project programming.

New Communication Specialist Joins Dane Extension Team



Carla Williams is the new Communications Specialist for Extension Dane County. Carla provides digital media support and engagement. She is responsible for content development, communications planning, and marketing. Her experience includes market research and analytics, marketing strategy, as well as audio, video, and print production.

Before joining Extension, Carla covered crime, court, and justice as a news correspondent for various news organizations throughout the country. She holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Edgewood College and a Master's in Journalism from the University of California Berkeley's School of Journalism.

Carla can be reached at williams.carla@countyofdane.com or 608-224-3720

Upcoming Events

- [Lego Building: Strength Challenge](#) - These LEGO Building Challenges are for aspiring builders in grades 3-8 and will be held at the UW Space Place on South Park Street.
- [4-H Ski Night at Tyrol Basin](#) - The annual 4-H Ski Night will be held at Tyrol Basin on Feb 24 from 4- 9 pm. This event is open to all 4-Hers and their friends.
- [Pesticide Applicator Training](#) – Training for those wish to receive certification in Wisconsin.
- [Green Thumb Gardening – Winter Vegetable Series](#) - A wide variety of vegetable themed gardening classes for both experienced and beginning gardeners.
- [Retirement Planning Today](#) - A course that teaches how to keep more of what you earn and make your money work harder for you in retirement.
- [Aging Mastery Program](#) - Build your own personal playbook for aging well. This fun, innovative program empowers you to take key steps to improve your well-being, adds stability to your life and strengthen ties to your community.
- [Organic Vegetable Production Conference](#) - This producer-initiated conference is designed for advanced growers and attracts participants from throughout the Midwest and beyond.
- [Community Gardening Summit](#) - The Gardens Summit is an annual gathering of gardeners organized by the Gardens Network, a partnership of Rooted, UW-Madison Extension Dane County, and the City of Madison.
- [Green Thumb Gardening – Spring Series](#) - The practical knowledge to keep your home garden thriving! Dane County Extension educators and local horticulture experts will provide in depth and accessible information for everyone from the novice to the experienced gardener.
- [Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance Short Course](#) – A series of workshops with the latest science based information for green industry professionals.
- [Wisconsin Master Naturalist Training](#) - Three training opportunities offered in Dane County to become a Master Naturalist in 2022.
- [Planning for a Fruitful Season](#) – A series of three engaging and free mini-webinars on fruit trees and strawberries.
- [Encouraging Financial Conversations](#) - a program designed for case managers, social workers, and other frontline staff to empower clients to achieve their financial goals and manage their money.
- [View More Events](#)

Dane County Staff

Gabriella Balza <i>Youth Development Educator</i>	Javiera Gonzalez <i>Clerk (Bilingual)</i>	Michelle Probst <i>Natural Resources Educator</i>
John Bedigian <i>FoodWise Support Staff</i>	Sandy Jensen <i>Deputy Director</i>	Emily Randerson <i>Nutrition Educator</i>
Jess Guffey Calkins <i>Food Systems Educator</i>	Lisa Johnson <i>Horticulture Educator</i>	Taylor Seale <i>Community Youth Development Educator</i>
Zulema Cruz-Hinds <i>Nutrition Educator</i>	Venkata Karri <i>Nutrition Educator</i>	Holly Simon <i>FoodWise Curriculum Coordinator</i>
Lisa Curley <i>4-H Extension Educator</i>	Sharon Lezberg <i>Community Development Educator</i>	Claire Strader <i>Organic Produce Educator</i>
Carrie Edgar <i>Area Extension Director</i>	Claire Mance <i>Healthy Community Coordinator</i>	Chip Thompson <i>Clerk</i>
Will Fulwider <i>Regional Crops Educator</i>	Deb Neubauer, <i>FEC Director and Human Development Educator</i>	Carla Williams <i>Communication Specialist</i>
Jackie Gehin <i>FoodWise Administrator</i>	Aracely Portillo <i>Nutrition Educator</i>	Chelsea Zegler <i>Agriculture & Water Quality Educator</i>