



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

## **Agriculture**

- A field day for farmers, agribusiness and conservation professionals where they viewed demonstration plots on relay cropping and inter-seeding cover crops into standing 30" and 60" corn with a modified drill, the benefits of forage production, and potential corn yield cost found in a 2021 case study. The goal is to support farmers and agribusiness professionals in new conservation strategies to keep the soil protected from erosion and encourage perennial cover.
- A series of videos for farmers, agribusiness and conservation professionals on innovative cropping systems and management practices going on within Dane County. The goal is to increase knowledge between neighbors and to improve farm profitability, soil health and water quality.
- Development/revisions of the bilingual Dairy Workers Training Skills modules for dairy employees where they will learn principles of and how to do each task on the farm. This effort is designed to support them in doing their daily tasks more confidently and efficiently while maintaining employee safety and animal welfare.
- A training series for diversified organic vegetable farmers where we learn about, discuss, and practice labor management techniques to improve employee satisfaction and retention on small-scale vegetable farms.
- Regular grower gatherings and field days for diversified organic vegetable farmers, where we discuss reducing tillage, production practices, direct marketing, and COVID-19 to increase climate resilience, farm financial stability, and overall farm success.
- Two on-farm research projects for diversified vegetable producers looking at the use of living aisles and no-till planting strips to mitigate the impacts of intense rain events on organic vegetable farms.

## **Community Development**

- Unit three of a program for early phase nonprofit leaders in Dane County, where participants in the Nonprofit Peer Learning Program pilot project engaged in a series of peer learning activities to build understanding of and competence in communication planning and telling their organization's story. The purpose of this program is to increase organizational capacity to address community needs.
- Planning support to the Dane County Broadband Task Force (an effort of the Dane County Board of Supervisors) that consists of assisting with planning meetings, identifying educational speakers and resources, and implementing a needs survey. The Task Force is charged with identifying and addressing gaps in broadband availability.
- Planning for a Community Garden Summit for Dane County gardeners in collaboration with community partners and public library staff. The goal of this effort is to teach participants food gardening and community building skills, so that community gardens will have sustained success, provide food access, and a sense of community.
- Planning for agricultural lease changes for farmers renting City of Madison land in collaboration with food council work group members. The goal of this effort is to improve the land stewardship of City of Madison agricultural land, so that it can be used for urban agriculture or prairie restoration goals.
- A monthly meeting with food council members where we address issues related to the food system in Madison and Dane County in order to strengthen and support the local food system.
- A monthly meeting with food systems partners where we address issues related to regional agriculture and food sovereignty in order to increase land and market opportunities for local growers.
- Planning for a produce incentive program for FoodShare participants in collaboration with City of Madison, Public Health Madison Dane County, Community Action Coalition of South Central Wisconsin, and Willy Street Grocery Co-op. The goal of this effort is to improve and enhance access to produce incentives so that more people can receive more healthy food, which also supports local growers.

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## Health and Wellbeing

- A 6 week virtual nutrition education series for elementary age youth where they learn the importance of choosing from the five food groups and how to create snacks without the need for a stove or oven. The goal of this series is to help youth make healthy choices the easy choices and improve their overall dietary habits at a young age.
- A 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 caregivers and their children.
- 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.

## Horticulture

- A session for those considering becoming Master Gardener Volunteers to increase understanding of the volunteer responsibilities and roles as well as the benefits and opportunities for personal growth in becoming a volunteer.
- An online program on "Garden Thugs: Perennial Plants to Avoid in the Garden" for members of the Greentree Garden Club to familiarize them with species that should be avoided and/or managed to avert or mitigate damage to landscapes and the environment using the most effective and environmentally friendly means of control.
- An online required course on lawn and landscape care for new and diverse homeowners in the Habitat for Humanity program that teaches participants best horticultural practices for maintaining their lawns/landscapes and minimizes harm to the environment through reduced pesticide and fertilizer use but maximizes benefit to the homeowner and the landscape, pollinators, and wildlife species.

## Human Development & Relationships

- A program for diverse, low income families in the Habitat for Humanity home ownership program where they participate in financial education workshops and coaching to learn to save for housing related expenses they will incur after they purchase their first home, to build equity in their home, and strive for overall financial well-being.
- 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.
- Planning for the 2022 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site is underway and will be held at the South Madison UW Partnership space on South Park Street in Madison.

## 4-H & Positive Youth Development

- Weekly By Youth for Youth (BYFY) meetings where students learn and identify issues, develop a call for proposal process, engage in decision making and make recommendations for funding youth led projects.
- Monthly Youth in Government (YGP) meeting where student representatives participated in community building activities and engaged in discussion on current topics.
- Ongoing support for adult and youth volunteers, providing them with resources and strategies to develop STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math) events and activities, where those not familiar with STEAM or the 4-H program will learn more about positive youth development and related skills. The goal is to spark interest in 4-H project areas and build connections with community members.

## Natural Resources

- A meeting of Dane County Departments where participants discussed PFAS issues within Dane County in order to better collaborate and address issues.
- A monthly meeting with Environmental Council members where we discuss issues related to natural resources in Dane County in order to protect and enhance the environment in the community.
- Development of an online composting training where participants learn how to compost and teach others in their community about composting.

## Upcoming Events

- [Soil, Water, and Nutrient Management](#)
- [Vegetable Farm Labor Grower Gathering](#)
- [Green Thumb Gardening – Winter Vegetable Series](#)
- [Retirement Planning Today](#)
- [Organic Vegetable Production Conference](#)
- [View More Events](#)

## New Regional Crops Educator



Will Fulwider began on December 3 as the Regional Crop and Soils Educator for Dane and Dodge County Extension. In this position, he will work with farmers across the two counties on field and forage crop production. Prior to joining Extension, Will worked with grape growers in California, diversified coffee farms in Kenya, and rice farmers in China. He has a Master's degree in Sustainable Development in Agriculture. Will is looking forward to bringing these experiences to bear in collaborating with farmers in south-central Wisconsin.

Will can be reached at [fulwider.william@countyofdane.com](mailto:fulwider.william@countyofdane.com) or 608-224-3708

## Dane County Staff

Gabriella Balza  
*Youth Development Educator*

John Bedigian  
*FoodWise Support Staff*

Jess Guffey Calkins  
*Food Systems Educator*

Zulema Cruz-Hinds  
*Nutrition Educator*

Lisa Curley  
*4-H Extension Educator*

Carrie Edgar  
*Area Extension Director*

Will Fulwider  
*Regional Crops Educator*

Jackie Gehin  
*FoodWise Administrator*

Javiera Gonzalez  
*Clerk (Bilingual)*

Sandy Jensen  
*Deputy Director*

Lisa Johnson  
*Horticulture Educator*

Venkata Karri  
*Nutrition Educator*

Sharon Lezberg  
*Community Development Educator*

Claire Mance  
*Healthy Community Coordinator*

Deb Neubauer, *FEC Director and  
Human Development Educator*

Aracely Portillo  
*Nutrition Educator*

Michelle Probst  
*Natural Resources Educator*

Taylor Seale  
*Community Youth Development Educator*

Holly Simon  
*FoodWise Curriculum Coordinator*

Claire Strader  
*Organic Produce Educator*

Chip Thompson  
*Clerk*

Chelsea Zegler  
*Agriculture & Water Quality Educator*