



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 beginning farmers to learn correct pasture set up for rotational grazing was demonstrated. The goal of this effort is to increase the success of beginning grazers for their own economic viability, which allows for more pasture on the landscape and therefore decreased soil erosion, increased water quality and fauna habitat.
- A series of videos for farmers, agribusiness and conservation professionals on innovative cropping systems and management practices going on within Dane County. The goal of this effort was to increase knowledge between stakeholders of what their innovative neighbors are doing within the county to improve farm profitability, soil health and water quality.
- A three-part bilingual (English and Spanish) webinar series for dairy farmers, owner/operators, employees, and agribusiness professionals, where they learned about hoof health and the prevention and control of infectious claw diseases in the milking herd, within an automated milking system, and within the dairy replacement herd to reduce lameness and increase animal wellbeing.
- 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.
- 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.



Horticulture

- An online class series ("Green Thumb Gardening") for the general public where they learned about insect biology, classification, ID and management techniques as well as the plant disease triangle, disease biology, categories of diseases, some common types of diseases and disease management. Through the classes, attendees learned how to manage insects and diseases for more success in gardens and landscapes.
- An online presentation for senior residents where they learned the definition and origin of invasive plant species, what they do, resources to learn more and management/ID. The information can be used to ID and eliminate invasives on attendees' properties to slow the spread and encourage good environmental stewardship.
- An online presentation for the public and Olbrich Garden members where they learned the definition and origin of invasive plant species, what they do, resources to learn more and management/ID. The information can be used to ID and eliminate invasives on attendees' properties to slow the spread and encourage good environmental stewardship.

Human Development & Relationships

- 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

Community Development

- A series of educational and deliberation sessions of the Mount Horeb Housing Task Force to recommend housing strategies for the village that will reduce the affordability gap.
- 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.
- A multi-sector work group that serves as a review committee for the City of Madison's Healthy Retail Access Program, where the work group meets with program applicants for initial review and approval of their application. The goal of these meetings is to provide the applicant with feedback on their application and presentation to ensure alignment with program goals and set them up for success when they seek final funding approval from the Madison Food Policy Council.
- A presentation to the Extension Committee of the Dane County Board Supervisors about the food security efforts happening in Dane County in school, community, and emergency food system settings. The goal of this presentation was to inform Supervisors about federal and local policy changes as well as community programming that together increase access to healthy, affordable food for Dane County residents with limited incomes who may or may not have been further impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Health and Wellbeing

- A five week virtual education series for kindergarteners where they learn the importance of eating fruits, vegetables and foods from all of the food groups as well as what healthy portions look like. The activity is designed to get students excited about eating in a healthy way by making their plates at home look colorful with food.
- A series of collaborative meetings with local, state, and national partners to plan a 12-week fresh produce box distribution program for 500 Dane county families with limited incomes as a means of mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 on local communities. The goal of this program is to increase access to fresh, healthy food for communities who have been disproportionately impacted by health inequities while creating a platform to raise awareness of the longer-term food system changes that are needed to achieve health equity.
- Planning for a summer physical activity promotion program in collaboration with Dane County Library Services' (DCLS) Summer Reading Program. Through group meetings and one-on-one support by FoodWise to a DCLS master's student intern, we created physical activity promotional materials and take-home games to be distributed at mobile library locations throughout Dane County, which encourage young children to engage in physical activity both at home and at mobile library locations.

"I just finished all of the lessons last week. My students loved them! They were engaging and just the right length. They led to some good discussions about food and our eating habits afterwards. Each week my kids looked forward to seeing what the new lesson would be!"

Kindergarten Teacher

Positive Youth Development

- The Youth in Governance 2020/2021 cohort wrapped up their term in May. While it was very different than past cohorts, the youth were able to participate in virtual meetings and learning opportunities to increase their understanding of local government and build leadership skills.
- Ag in the Classroom Coordinator presented a dairy nutrition lesson at the John Haag Farm on May 15 for a pilot program serving area Girl Scouts.
- Madison Magazine article featuring Ag in the Classroom coordinator and regarding COVID and the effects on local beef access.
- Program at West Middleton Elementary School for the 4K-4th grade students planting pumpkins for their "Seeds of Hope" program. There were approximately 200 students that took part.

Upcoming Events

- Build It Strong: Child Care Business Foundations Course June 5 – Sept 28
- Food Entrepreneurship (FEED) Summer 2021 Workshop Series June 7-28
- Heart of the Farm Coffee Chats June 14 – August 9
- Money As you Grow Train the Trainer - June 17
- Green Thumb Gardening May 3 – June 14
- StrongBodies™ virtual classes for Dane County residents

[View more Upcoming Events](#)

Staff Highlights



Gabriella “Gabby” Balza joined the Dane County Extension team on Monday, May 24th as the Youth Development Associate Educator. She will coordinate the Youth in Governance program, By Youth for Youth (BYFY) program and assist with the 4-H community club program.

Gabby can be reached at balza.gabriella@countyofdane.com.



Anne Runde is the James W. Crowley summer intern for 2021. She is an Ag Business Management major going into her senior year at UW-Madison and working toward a certificate in entrepreneurship. She will be working closely with María José Fuenzalida, Dairy Educator, this summer.

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 Program Coordinator

Carrie Edgar
Area Extension Director

Lytonia Floyd
Nutrition Educator

María José Fuenzalida
Dairy Educator

Jackie Gehin
FoodWise Administrator

Javiera Gonzalez
Clerk (Bilingual)

Alissa Grenawalt
Ag in the Classroom Coordinator

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*

Udai Olivares
Nutrition Educator

Aracely Portillo
Nutrition Educator

Holly Simon
FoodWise Curriculum Coordinator

Claire Strader
Organic Produce Educator

Chip Thompson
Clerk

Chelsea Zegler
Crops & Soils Educator