

July 2025 Program Report

Community-Driven Plan Shapes the Future of Dane County's Food System

Dane County food organizations have come together to strengthen the regional food system in response to gaps highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2023 Dane County Food Council Pandemic Food System Final Report emphasized the need for a regional food system action plan.



Food Systems Educator **Jess Guffey Calkins** and partners received a 2023 USDA Regional Food System Partnership grant to develop a community-driven plan. In February 2025, the team launched a community engagement process, gathering input from farmers, retailers, food banks, community organizations, and residents through in-person sessions and online surveys.

Engagement has been strong, with participants sharing ideas and taking steps to improve the local food system.

All input will inform the Dane County Food Action Plan, which will include recommendations, strategies, and actions and is scheduled for completion in April 2026. Jess also maintains a [website](#) and newsletter to keep the community informed.

Hatching Curiosity at BLW Neighborhood Center

Nadia Alber, 4-H Associate Educator, collaborated with the Bridge Lake Point Waunona (BLW) Neighborhood Center to offer a seven-week ChickQuest curriculum on the life cycle of a chicken as part of BLW's after-school educational programming. This program was designed to expand access to 4-H STEM activities for youth in this low-income neighborhood community.

Evaluation of the program showed positive results from both students and staff. Youth participants reported feeling welcome, enjoying the activities, and gaining new knowledge about chickens and their care. Many still talk about the experience of hatching and caring for chicks.

Nadia Alber reached out to community clubs and after-school programs to explore opportunities for starting a future 4-H club. BLW was interested in partnering and hosted a modified ChickQuest series tailored to their program, with the hope of eventually starting a 4-H club in a format adapted to their community.

The goal of this partnership is to broaden public perception of 4-H and expand STEM opportunities to audiences who have not traditionally had access to these programs.

For more info contact Nadia at alber.nadia@danecounty.gov.



"People came from all around the city to visit the chicks and see the process. It was an exciting time for our neighborhood."

-BLW staff member



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DANE COUNTY

This summary report highlights just a few of the programs and projects Dane County Extension Educators facilitated or taught this past month. If you would like more information on any of our programs, please [contact me](#) or [visit our website](#).

Carrie Edgar, Director
Dane County UW Extension

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Financial Coaching Supports Veterans at Porchlight

Clare Dahl, Bilingual Financial and Life Span Educator (Spanish), provides accessible, personalized financial coaching to residents at Porchlight's Veteran's Transitional Housing Program (VTHP) through an "open office hours" style format. This approach grew from a request by the program manager, who identified a need for financial education among several veterans in the program.

Clare has been joining weekly house meetings at VTHP and staying afterward to offer one-on-one coaching and printed resources. This format has proven to be the most effective way to connect with residents and tailor support to their individual situations.

Thank you so much for your insight. you've been very helpful to me so far, I will definitely try some of these ideas.

-VTHP resident Joe



The men living at VTHP face significant barriers to economic stability. By creating space for them to share their stories and ask questions, the financial education provided is personalized and relevant. During a recent visit, one resident sought help obtaining a credit report, another asked about addressing debt and understanding the credit system after relying solely on pre-paid cards, and another discussed the decision to work with a payee after being declared "incompetent." Through this work, residents are gaining practical tools and information to address their unique financial challenges.

For more information contact Clare Dahl at dahl.clare@danecounty.gov

Tools for Farm Employers to Protect Workers in High Heat

Sarah Janes Ugoretz, Diversified Vegetable Educator, partnered with Community Involved Sustainable Agriculture and FairShare CSA Coalition to host a series of online trainings for farm employers and managers on steps they can take to keep employees safe while working in high heat.

Many smaller, diversified vegetable farms are exempt from mandated federal and state protections, leaving them less prepared to protect worker health and safety during extreme temperatures.

The training identified key heat-related risks and outlined creative systems, policies, and practices farms across the country have used to protect workers.

Evaluation results showed that 70% of participants found the training "very helpful" and 30% found it "somewhat helpful." All attendees reported an increase in knowledge, and half indicated they plan to make changes to their practices.

Participant takeaways included a greater understanding of their role in managing crews during the summer heat and plans to develop clear heat safety policies with input from farm crews.

This session presented a ton of valuable information in a way that was clear and compelling. I truly learned so much. Thank you!

-Training participant

Upcoming Extension Programs



Encouraging Financial Conversations Booster Session

Thur, August 21st | 10:30 - 12:00p | Zoom

Join us at our upcoming free program and practice starting financial conversations, asking questions to promote financial goals and using listening skills with clients.



Raising Wisconsin's Children: How to Talk to Kids About Tough Stuff

Thur, August 21st | 1:00-2:00p | Zoom

Join us for a FREE online program to connect with other parents. Get practical, positive, research-based parenting ideas. Help children grow.



Planning AHEAD Series - Hosted by Fitchburg Senior Center

September 3rd - October 15th | 1:30 - 2:30p | Zoom

Join a 7-session program that helps participants understand how to plan for the end of life.