



AGRICULTURE



If it happens on a farm or in a field, the Extension Institute of Agriculture works with you to achieve better results. Our innovative dairy management programs range from genetics to farm and business management. Extension researchers work hand-in-hand with row crop, forage and fresh produce growers to provide best practices for every aspect of the growing phase. We also advise communities on using sustainable practices to create inviting spaces free from invasive species.

Crops

Liz Gartman, Regional Crops Educator

A presentation for the Washington County “Thinking Outside the Barn” program for area crop growers, agency staff and consultants where participants learned about the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program and the project taking place in Washington County. Through this presentation, attendees learned about the requirements for the program, the types of research they can engage in along with opportunities for collaboration between Extension and crop consultants to complete the program.

Questions surrounding nitrogen use in crop production are common in our area. The Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program is an opportunity for growers to ask questions surrounding nitrogen management on their farm and participate in on farm research to answer those questions. I was asked to provide an overview of the program along with some of the challenges and opportunities this project presented to us. I collaborated with Allen Dornacker, the crop grower hosting our NOPP site, and we put together and presented a slide deck that outlined the expectations of the NOPP program as well as some of our take home messages regarding the challenges and opportunities that on farm research offers. There were approximately 70 attendees at the meeting, representing crop growers, NRCS/FSA staff, county land and water staff and crop consultants. This size group gave us great exposure for the NOPP program and encouraged producers to think about opportunities to participate in the project.

An article for the Midwest Forage Association’s Clippings newsletter that discussed the importance of identifying issues with silage storage structures, the problems for forage quality associated with improper storage systems and some factors to consider when assessing structure integrity. The goal is to identify areas that producers can focus on to ensure proper silage storage in an effort to improve silage fermentation and overall forage quality.

Forage growers have the challenge of dealing with a variety of factors that can affect overall forage quality, many of those issues cannot be avoided. However, silage storage is a key area that can be better managed and as we empty these structures in anticipation of a new crop of forage, it is a prime time to assess these structures and perform maintenance or choose different storage options. I researched the topic and pulled together an article that discussed different silage storage structures and highlighted opportunities to improve and maintain those systems to optimize forage quality and reduce feed shrink.



YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



Positive Youth Development prepares the youth of today to become the effective, empathetic adults of tomorrow. Our research-based youth enrichment programs like teens in governance build youth and adult capacity and partnerships that help both sides grow. 4-H clubs, camps and after-school programs give young people the hands-on experiences they need to develop an understanding of themselves and the world.

4-H

Ron Jakubisin, 4-H Program Educator

4-H Planning meetings for 4-H include:

- Summer Camp Volunteer Planning Committee with guidance from the educator, has reviewed teen counselor applications and set dates for March interviews.
- 4-H Teen Connect planning meeting(s) for March 15 event. Teen Connect offers an opportunity within 4-H to continue peer connection through age appropriate activities, social activities while keeping the mission of 4-H in the forefront.
- Planning for summer day camp of 4-H youth identified as Cloverbud members. (K-3rd graders). Day Camps for this age group has been lacking the past few years due to low volunteer engagement. Planning included schedule of educational activities & communication to Leaders Association to recruit teen and adult volunteers

Monthly electronic-based communications for all Wash. Co 4-H families of information about all club activities, countywide projects, resources and announcements are contributed by and distributed to 4-H families that offer opportunities to increase skills and engage in 4-H activities.

Monthly Cloverline Newsletter brings together current 4-H resources, educational events and announcements in one newsletter which is posted on the 4-H county website and emailed via 4HOnline database for all 16 Clubs and 20 Countywide projects to access.

Weekly Club Leader Update email blast. Features 3 (new) priorities, announcements, and/or resources for 4-H volunteers serving as Club and Project Leaders to increase the capacity of volunteers to deliver 4-H club and project activities.

The need for this effort was prompted by continual requests for information and resources by the Washington County 4-H Club Leaders, Project leaders, and parents. Additionally, events both local and statewide are shared on a web-based calendar.

A series of interviews using a community needs assessment tool where a collection of data from one-on-one meetings with local youth-serving organizations will be conducted, data organized, and analyzed. The results will review the work done by K-12 institutes and Moraine Park Technical College with local employers to identify possible interests or areas for new 4-H clubs and adult volunteers.

Wisconsin 4-H empowers youth to reach their full potential by working and learning in partnership with adults and is committed to providing opportunities for youth to learn life skills. Washington County faces an unprecedented shortage of volunteers to dedicate time to 4H clubs. Adding a 4-H Educator is intended to dedicate efforts to broadening 4-H membership opportunities by establishing new 4-H Clubs. 4-H Clubs serve as the cornerstone of the Wisconsin 4-H program, comprising five or more youth under the guidance of adult volunteers, partner organization staff, or University of Wisconsin Extension Educators. These clubs adhere to a structured program model and provide youth-driven learning opportunities. New clubs aim to offer avenues for youth development, addressing essential elements that will best serve the Washington County community. One focus includes post-secondary pathways including STEM-related project areas. It will also include expanding access to youth starting in grade school to help them learn about STEM and find their SPARK. Sparks are self-discovered and self-identified. This role will begin by completing a needs assessment and reviewing work already being done by K-12 institutes and Moraine Park Technical College with local employers to identify possible interests or areas for new youth clubs. Outcomes from the needs assessment will lead the programming efforts and priorities. Priority club formation and project area priorities include: Clubs that cultivate a highly skilled workforce by fostering critical thinking and STEM activities in our kids, projects that enhance partnerships that increase specific skills desired by our workforce and utilize professional human resources of our industry, projects and partnerships that utilize community facility assets for our youth (i.e. Moraine Park Technical College's Manufacturing, Automation and Robotics Lab and FANUC Robots Impact Core Learning assets in Germantown).

Development of a summer day camp offered for youth grades 3-8, where youth learn about Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). This effort is to encourage youth to feel a sense of belonging and increase their interest in STEM.

Based on a needs assessment conducted in January/February 2025, STEM programming is a priority in Washington County schools. There is a lack of interest in STEM careers between middle and high school. The hands-on interactive STEM camp will serve to enhance awareness and excitement in STEM and create new opportunities for existing and new 4-H members to engage and learn about STEM and other 4-H opportunities.

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