



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
RACINE COUNTY



# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Extension Racine County



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# Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**UW-Madison Extension's outreach** creates key connection points for families, farms, communities, businesses, nonprofit organizations, government, and more. We support local volunteers and leaders to take action and serve as role models in their communities, and we make sure Wisconsinites have the latest research, best practices, and educational opportunities.



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# 2024 at a Glance



**11,336**

Total educational contacts



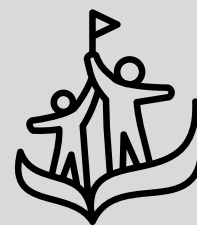
**1,416**

FoodWise program participants



**2,691**

Human Development & Relationships  
educational contacts



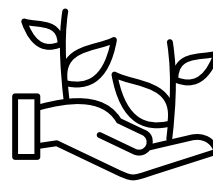
**2,755**

Positive Youth Development  
educational contacts



**1,097**

Youth and adult volunteers enrolled in  
the 4-H program



**798**

Residents in Racine, Kenosha, and  
Milwaukee Counties who participated  
in the plant health-advising program



# Horticulture

*Extension's Horticulture Program in Racine and Kenosha Counties provides research-based information to gardeners and Green Industry professionals. Horticulture training programs offered through Extension Racine and Kenosha Counties in 2024 include:*

**Gardening for Beginners Program:** A series of five face-to-face training sessions that helped residents grow healthy vegetables and landscape to improve their diet and environment. An average of 24 people participated in all five sessions and shared that they gained significant increases in gardening knowledge.

**Woody Invasive Plant Management Workshop (Racine):** A Tree of Heaven Invasive Species – Identification workshop was held at Riverbend Nature Center. Successful strategies for combating this woody invasive species were shared with 53 participants.

**Racine Correctional Institute Gardening Program:** A weekly series of gardening-focused training sessions and activities from April through October for Racine Correctional Institute residents in Sturtevant. Gardening skills and techniques to enrich healthy diets were taught. 12 residents completed the training program and received a participation certificate. Residents shared that they gained confidence and skills in building and maintaining their own vegetable garden because of this program.

**Plant Health Advising Program:** 798 residents utilized the research-based plant health information service available to Racine, Kenosha, and Milwaukee County residents. The educator and trained Master Gardener volunteers answered inquiries through email, phone calls, texts, and walk-ins. One participant commented, "I was interested in learning what plants native to Wisconsin would work in our small gardening plot. Both the information in the Extension agent's response and the resource to which he directed me to were a great help in choosing plants wisely. A wonderful resource!"

**Sweet Potato Variety Trial:** A preliminary trial study, occurring in both Sturtevant and Bristol, was started that will assess the growth and performance of sweet potato varieties in raised beds. This study will help gardeners in cultivating and selecting improved sweet potato varieties that are suitable for southern Wisconsin. This trial will be continued in 2025.





# Horticulture

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**Monthly Landscape & Gardening Q & A (Racine and Kenosha):** An average of 133 people participated in a monthly online program for consumers to ask questions about trees, shrubs, garden vegetables, ornamentals, and lawns.

**Spring into Gardening Conference:** Approximately 85 gardeners and Master Gardener volunteers learned various gardening and landscape techniques and skills to improve their sustainable landscape and gardening through this conference.

**Green Industry and Other Gardening Programs:** Landscape and Grounds Maintenance Short Course (**275**), Urban Forestry Workshops (**73**), Invasive Species Workshop (**53**), Garden Lectures (**92**), Tree Nursery Webinars (**33**)



# Agriculture

*Whether on the farm or in the field, we're on the front lines of modern agriculture, helping producers build stronger and more productive food systems. From managing livestock to crops to strategic financial planning for farms, our educators and researchers help solve challenges that Wisconsin producers face.*

**Diversified Vegetable Grower Needs Assessment:** Completed initial needs assessment for Racine County diversified vegetable and fruit growers and grower-serving organizations. This was accomplished through phone calls, emails, farm visits, and vendor booth interactions to meet and learn about what growers see as gaps in the resources available and where they see challenges and opportunities. Targeted programming and workshop planning for 2025 will be a result of these conversations.

**Outreach and Education:** Extension Racine County provided resources and guidance on agriculture-related questions to better inform the public and encourage success in growing.

**Funding:** Extension applied for several funding opportunities aimed at providing 2025 diversified vegetable programming and education to Racine County, as well as introducing on-farm variety trials from our University of Wisconsin-Madison Emerging Crops Accelerator program.





# Human Development & Relationships

*We embrace the philosophy that each stage of life is unique, exciting, and filled with potential. Our programs promote aging-friendly communities, coach parents, and help families put technology, mindfulness, and financial awareness into everyday use.*

**Positive Solutions, Parenting Education, and Resources:** Extension hosted 30 parenting workshops, helping 329 parents/caregivers build knowledge and skills about child development, early learning and literacy, emotion coaching, positive parenting techniques, and coping with parental stress. One Positive Solutions workshop series (5-sessions) was conducted for 13 parents/caregivers on children's social emotional learning to help strengthen families.

**Rent Smart:** Rent Smart reached 196 individuals at Veterans Housing & Recovery, the YWCA Work Experience Program, the Racine Spanish Center, UW-Parkside, and through statewide virtual workshops. Over 250 individuals statewide participated in Rent Smart Train-the-Trainer boosting community capacity. Extension is part of a community health improvement plan workgroup to address eviction and housing issues for Racine County residents.

**Financial Education Programs:** Thirty-three (33) professionals participated in Encouraging Financial Conversations to increase knowledge and confidence when engaging clients in financial conversations. Planning AHEAD, a workshop series to prepare for end of life decisions, was offered at Marian Housing, the Waterford and Racine Public Libraries, and online with over 62 participants. Re-Entry Ready was offered for the first time at Racine Correctional Institute where eight (8) individuals improved their financial knowledge in preparation for re-entry into society.

**Resources for Justice Involved Families:** Conducted programs at local justice facilities that supported 156 parents in maintaining relationships with their children and fostering early literacy. The Making Reading Memories recorded reading program reached 45 parents, 73 children receiving 81 videos and 108 books, and 55 caregivers.

**Community Capacity Building, Partnerships, and Outreach:** Extension collaborated with community and government agencies to support networking and educational events including the Western Racine County Networking Breakfast with 55 participants from family-serving agencies. Extension is a part of the Racine County CHIP workgroups on eviction and housing and childcare as well as a member of the Safety and Well-Being Collaborative convened by The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread.

**Thank you to our partners:** Acelero Head Start, Burlington Area School District, Burlington Public Library, Emaus Lutheran Church, Family Preservation West, Geneva St. COP House, Goodland Montessori, Marian Housing, Racine Correctional Institute, Racine County Foster Care, Racine County Human Services, Racine Financial Empowerment Center, Racine Literacy Council, Racine Public Library, Spanish Center, Racine Unified School District, Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility, Sturtevant Transitional Facility, Union Grove Public Library, United Way of Racine County, UW-Parkside, Veterans Housing and Recovery, Waterford Public Library, and YWCA.





# Positive Youth Development

*Through research, education, and community-based partnerships, Extension Racine County Youth Development programs are focused on helping young people gain knowledge and skills to become productive citizens.*

**Youth In Governance (YIG):** Ten youth representing nine area high schools served on Racine County Board Committees during which youth brought their viewpoint to community issues and concerns. They developed their confidence, level of civic engagement, and leadership skills. YIG representatives conducted book drives at their respective schools and hosted a youth literacy event at the Racine Public Library to distribute free books to families and youth in attendance. Books were distributed during resource fairs and back-to-school events across Racine County to encourage elementary-middle school age youth to fill their libraries and read with their families.

**Juntos Program:** Juntos (pronounced “Who-n-toes”) means “Together” in Spanish and works to unite community partners to provide Latinx 8-12th grade students and their parents with knowledge, skills, and resources to prevent youth from dropping out of school and to encourage families to work together to gain access to college. Juntos family workshops were conducted at St. Charles Church in Burlington with a total of 10 families in attendance. UW-Extension Racine County worked closely with the Burlington Area School District Bilingual Engagement Coordinator to engage middle school and high school students in after-school Juntos workshops. Additionally, the Juntos program successfully established relationships with the Racine Unified School District, providing consistent student workshops to dual language students at Mitchell Middle School.

**Youth Led Efforts for Disability Inclusion:** In 2023, UW-Madison, Extension Racine County was awarded the Sparks Grant from Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities. Extension utilized the grant to provide 9 youth from across Racine County the opportunity to plan and lead a community conversation on Disability Inclusion. Youth spent the summer of 2024 learning about disability justice, crafting questions for the community conversation, and engaging in role-play activities designed to prepare them to facilitate conversations on these topics. Youth successfully hosted the community conversation in September of 2024 where more than 30 community members, elected officials, teachers, and families discussed how to create a more inclusive Racine County.





# Wisconsin 4-H

*4-H involves youth in project-based education. Through project learning, youth can explore their interests (“sparks”) and master new skills. 4-H projects are meant to be hands-on to create a memorable learning experience. This hands-on process allows youths to understand not only how to do something but also why they do it.*

**4-H Clubs and Projects:** Racine County has 12 community clubs that meet once a month. Club meetings are educational, recreational, and service-oriented. Additionally, we offer 9 countywide projects and 130 Club Projects. Project meetings focus on learning a specific skill and giving youths opportunities to try new things. Racine County youths can try archery, woodworking, sewing, cooking, photography, dog training, and so much more! They can also learn to take care of livestock and smaller animals like poultry and rabbits.

**Community Service:** Racine County 4-H provides opportunities to promote positive youth development programming. Youths participated in a wide array of community service and service learning opportunities.

- “Stuff the Bus” toy collection in partnership with the Racine County Police Department
- Ham and Turkey Drive in partnership with Veterans Outreach
- Duffle Bag Drive in partnership with Racine County Foster Care
- Santa’s Workshop in partnership with women’s shelters across Southeastern Wisconsin

**Summer Camp 2024:** Youth in grades 6-8 participated in Adventure Camp that focused on wilderness skills such as cooking food, building fires, and sleeping in tents while camping on Black Hawk Island. Base Camp was for 4-H members in grades 3-5 and focused on building friendships, persistence, independence, and nature appreciation. During Nature Camp, Cloverbud Project Members, aged Kindergarten-2nd grade, focused on reptiles, amphibians, and their habitats. Cloverbud Day Camp focused on learning about cultures from around the world.

**4-H Events:** Youths participated in the Racine County 4-H Night with the Stars, Recognition Celebration, Horse Camp, Art 4 All, Countywide Officer Training, Camp Counselor Training, Cloverbud Fun Day, Pumpkin Science Night, Fall Bash, National 4-H Week, 4-H Open House, Holiday Ball, and Roller Skating Party.





# Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives

*The University of Madison, Division of Extension Racine and Kenosha FoodWise program goal is to provide learning opportunities and empower communities to select healthy foods and beverages. Nutrition Education is an essential part of improving health outcomes within the Racine community.*

**Reaching Countywide Audiences:** In 2024, FoodWise educators taught our curricula in a variety of settings throughout Racine County. Our educators conducted youth and adult programming from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) at schools, food pantries, Head Start, and other community organizations. Efforts by our SNAP educators accounted for 228 hours of educational lessons and EFNEP educators taught 214 educational lessons.

**442 +**

programs  
taught

**1 in 5**

activities was held in  
a Spanish-language  
environment

**25**

community  
partnerships

**Community Outreach:** FoodWise offered youth and adult-focused curricula in Racine County during 2024. Our youth education reaches audiences from early care through high school. All programs are geared towards the target age group and teach students about healthy eating, nutrition, and physical activity. For example, approximately 50 students at Case High School were taught about healthy food preparation, cooking lessons, and reading food labels for nutrition facts using the Teen Cuisine curriculum. Students at Our Lady of Grace Academy participated in Color Me Healthy sessions where they learned about different fruits and vegetables through tasting experiences. Our adult educational curricula focus on themes of nutrition, budgeting, physical activity, and food preparation. Approximately 30 seniors at Marian Housing participated in FoodWise's "Strong Bodies" class.



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