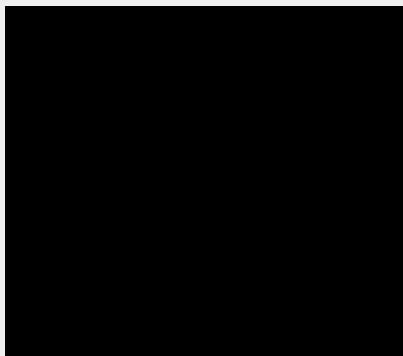


2025 Annual Report

Division of Extension
Racine County





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.



Learn more at
extension.wisc.edu



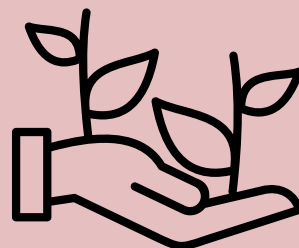
2025 AT A GLANCE



7,600+
Total educational contacts

104

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



1,004

Youth and adult volunteers enrolled in
the 4-H program

2,486

FoodWise program participants



102

Outreach Planning/Activities



AGRICULTURE



OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

In-person programs targeting challenges identified in a 2024 needs assessment included crop scouting, insect and disease field identification, integrated pest management, high tunnel management, and a small-scale farming tool workshop.

The first Upper Midwest Honeyberry Academy was held in June. Participants attended from all over the Midwest (100+) to learn about production systems, breeding programs, and collaborations between researchers. It also provided an opportunity for networking among established and prospective honeyberry growers.

Educational resources, targeting small to medium-scaled diversified vegetable growers, were developed to bridge the gap between consumer growers and large-scale processing vegetable growers and traditional row crop and forage production systems. Pest and disease identification manuals are being created and direct market vegetable production guides that are currently being updated are bridging that gap.

RESEARCH

With funding from the North Central Extension Risk Management Education program (USDA), an on-farm research honeyberry trial was established to collect data on variety suitability and survival. This two-year project will incorporate on-farm workshops on irrigation systems and honeyberry production strategies. This research project connects with ongoing honeyberry research being conducted at UW-Madison Agricultural Research Station sites in west Madison, Sturgeon Bay, and Spooner.

FUNDING

External funding provides additional opportunities for research, outreach, and development of educational resources to strengthen our communities.

External funding applied for in 2025:

- USDA/AMS Local Food Production Program: Growing Wisconsin Produce Farmers through Education, Experience, and Mentoring
- AgriProspects Mini-Grant (USDA Extension Foundation): Accelerating the Path to New Crop Adoption: Creating a Framework for Emerging Crop Development Initiatives
- North Central Extension Risk Management Education: Risk Management Tools and Training to Support Commercial Emerging Berry Crop Production in the Upper Midwest
- Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Clean Sweep program for collection of agricultural hazardous waste in Kenosha and Racine Counties.





RESEARCH

In collaboration with Dr. Doug Soldat, UW Turfgrass Extension Specialist, a research trial performance of bee lawn seed mixes in comparison to traditional lawn grass species was conducted at O.J. Noer Research Center in Madison. Preliminary findings of the study indicate certain lawn bee species like Microclover and Yaak Yarrow exhibited substantially higher density and establishment success than other broadleaf bee lawn species. The study data will be collected during the next two years and published in a peer-reviewed journal.

OUTREACH

Growing Blueberries in Raised Beds

The educator presented at the *Wisconsin Fruits and Vegetable Conference* for 28 growers and at the *Wisconsin Garden Expo* in Madison for more than 200 individuals. The presentation focused on blueberry varietal performance in raised bed plots, which was part of the Horticulture Educator's research.

Adopt a Tree

In partnership with the City of Racine's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department, the educator facilitated a bareroot tree planting demonstration for residents and distributed 14 bareroot trees to community members who are disadvantaged. The educator published a bareroot tree publication guide for homeowners and distributed it during the Adopt a Tree Program.

TEACHING

Ask the Expert: Landscape & Gardening Live Sessions

The educator served as one of the technical expert panelists in answering live landscape and gardening inquiries during the Statewide program "Ask the Expert, Q&A Landscape & Gardening". This monthly online series attracted more than 100 people and has a 99% rating of "Very Good" or "Good" among the viewers.

Spring into Gardening Conference (Racine and Kenosha)

Thirty-five people participated in the *2025 Spring into Gardening Conference* hosted by Extension and Racine Kenosha Master Gardener Association. Gardeners and Master Gardener volunteers learned various gardening and landscape techniques and skills to improve their sustainable landscape and gardening through this conference.





A TRANSITIONAL YEAR

In 2025, FoodWise in Racine County was federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The congressional budget reconciliation bill signed into law on July 4, 2025, ended federal SNAP-Ed funding, effective September 30, 2025. We are grateful for our collaborators and participants and the opportunity to advance healthier communities in Racine County. EFNEP-funded nutrition education programs will continue in Racine County in 2026.

FoodWise teaches practical, evidence-based skills in meal planning, food safety, and food resource management, helping people stretch food dollars and make healthier choices.

This year, FoodWise collaborated with 30 community organizations including schools, youth programs, Head Start programs, senior programs, and food pantries to engage 2,486 participants (1,494 in SNAP-Ed, 992 in EFNEP) in English and Spanish in a variety of settings in Racine County.

2025 FOODWISE BY THE NUMBERS

- Collaborated with 13 schools to reach students in preK-12th grades with nutrition education, hands-on activities, and healthy food samples.
- Led 6 groups for seniors featuring *StrongBodies* strength-training and *Seniors Eating Well* nutrition education programs, improving participants' strength, balance, independence, and overall health.
- Provided education in Spanish in dual-language classrooms, Head Start, and other community organizations to help participants make healthy choices on a budget.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

FoodWise brings nutrition education and resources to families to meet needs at Racine elementary schools. For example, in 2025 FoodWise worked with Julian Thomas and Knapp Elementary Schools, building skills and knowledge through hands-on activities, reading, fun movement breaks, and food tastes to reinforce lesson concepts. Seasonal "Harvest of the Month" recipe cards and materials were sent home with parents to further encourage eating healthy fruits and vegetables at home. One parent commented, "My son came home informing the rest of the family how important it is to eat his fruits and veggies... and eating at-home meals is best." Another parent noticed their child was "more open to trying new foods." A teacher commented, "Please continue this much needed program as it reaches students who may not otherwise be provided the opportunity to learn about the nutritional values of the foods that they eat. This program allows them to learn about healthy eating choices at an early age. It's a great supplement to our Health curriculum."





PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The programs in the Human Development and Relationships Institute cover topics such as parenting, family relationships, aging, and financial education. We promote the development of resilient individuals and communities across Wisconsin and at every stage of life through meaningful collaborations and researched-based education. We promote strong social ties by helping create social cohesion and connecting families to agencies and organizations. In addition, we build community capacity by helping organizations make better plans to tackle complex issues. We support family stability by working to change the conditions where people live, work, and play. We help families overcome challenges by giving them the tools they need to thrive at every stage of their lives.

FINANCIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

322 participants attended *Rent Smart* to help tenants have a successful rental experience. Over 180 individuals statewide participated in *Rent Smart Train-the-Trainer* boosting capacity. 35 professionals participated in *Encouraging Financial Conversations* to increase knowledge and confidence in engaging clients in financial conversations. 20 participants improved their financial knowledge through *Re-Entry Ready* sessions. Over 75 individuals attended *Planning AHEAD* to prepare for end-of-life decisions.

RESOURCES FOR JUSTICE INVOLVED FAMILIES

Conducted programs at local justice facilities that supported 80 parents in maintaining relationships with their children and fostering literacy. Over 200 books were distributed to local justice facilities. Over 500 families benefited from improved visiting space at Racine Correctional Institute.

PARENTING EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Extension hosted 20 parenting workshops, helping 468 parents/caregivers build knowledge and skills about child development, early learning and literacy, emotion coaching, positive parenting techniques, and coping with parental stress. Extension collaborated with community and government agencies to support networking and educational events including the Western Racine County Networking Breakfast with 50 participants from family-serving agencies.

THANK YOU TO OUR COLLABORATORS

Arc of Racine, Blanket of Love-Ascension, Burlington Area School District, Burlington Public Library, City of Racine, Family Preservation West, Geneva St. COP House, Goodland Montessori, Lakeside Curative Services, Oak Park Place Assisted Living, Racine Correctional Institute, Racine County, Racine County ELEVATE Program, Racine County Foster Care, Racine County Human Services, Racine Friendship House, Racine Public Library, Racine Unified School District, Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility, Safe Families for Children, St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Sturtevant Transitional Facility, Graham Public Library (Union Grove), United Way of Racine County, Waterford Public Library, Waterford Schools





YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & LEADERSHIP

YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE (YIG)

The Youth in Governance Program brings youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders. In 2025, Group 11 of the Youth in Governance Program completed their term successfully by April of 2025, and Group 12 was sworn in. Both groups were made up of ten youth representing nine area high schools across Racine County. County Board Supervisors mentored youth representatives during their one-year term of service, during which youth brought their viewpoint to civic priorities while developing their leadership and civic engagement skills. By the end of their term, Group 11 conducted a service project on the topic of career and professional development. In collaboration with the Racine County Summer Youth Employment Program and Racine Video Production, they created a short informational video comprised of short skits that provided tips on how youth can excel at their first job or internship experience.

CAREER AND COLLEGE READINESS

JUNTOS PROGRAM

Juntos (pronounced “Who-n-toes”) means “Together” in Spanish and works to unite community partners to provide 8th-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. A total of 34 Juntos workshops and events were conducted at Mitchell Middle School, Burlington High School, Park High School, Horlick High School, and Case High School throughout the year. This included 15 after school Juntos 4-H club meetings that took place at Karcher Middle School and Burlington High School. Additionally, the Positive Youth Development Educator provided Spanish-speaking students and families with college and career readiness resources at outreach events such as Racine Unified’s *Be Your Future Expo*, Case High School’s *Lunch & Learn*, Horlick High School’s *College Resource Fair*, and Park High School’s *Cafe & Conchas*. In 2025, the Burlington High School Juntos 4-H Club attended the *Youth as Partners in Civic Leadership Conference* in Wisconsin Dells, where they learned how to conduct a service project action plan and led a workshop on Latino Dance.

NIA PROGRAM

In 2025, UW-Extension Racine County joined UW-Extension Kenosha, Waukesha and Milwaukee Counties on the Nia grant. Funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Nia programming in Wisconsin and North Carolina provide youth new opportunities in exploring their post-high school career and educational options. In December, youth in the Nia program were invited to the Wisconsin Herd Basketball Game for 4-H Day. Youth participants learned about career opportunities in the sports industry and got to meet peers from across the state. The Positive Youth Development Educator conducted several small-group and one-on-one career and college exploration sessions with ESL students at Case High School.



WISCONSIN 4-H



WHAT IS 4-H?

Racine County 4-H is part of the nation's largest positive youth development organization. By working with caring adult volunteers, youth can explore their interests ("sparks") and master new skills. 4-H also focuses on giving youth voice, leadership training, and community service opportunities.

MEMBERSHIP

At the end of the 2025 4-H year, Racine County's 4-H enrollment was 1,004 members including 176 adult volunteers. Of the 1,004 4-H member, 340 were first generation members. Because volunteers are the cornerstone of 4-H, an inaugural Volunteer Summit was held in conjunction with Kenosha County 4-H in March of 2025.

VOLUNTEER SUMMIT

This event focused on 4-H adult volunteers and those individuals interested in becoming volunteers. The goal of the Volunteer Summit was to provide educational opportunities and resources while celebrating the hard work of our volunteers. The summit was a time for volunteers from different counties and projects to connect and collaborate. The keynote address was given by the State Volunteer Development Specialist, Dawn Vandevort, and workshops were provided by Racine and Kenosha County 4-H Educators and Pamela Larson, the Area 19 Extension Director. There were 40 volunteers in attendance and 12 youth volunteers who provided logistical support throughout the day. Local businesses and athletic organizations contributed to door prizes and swag. Culvers offered free custard. A resource fair comprised of local vendors shared fundraising, community service, and educational opportunities.

BASE AND ADVENTURE CAMP

Base Camp was held at Upham Woods Learning Center. This camp was attended by youth in 3rd-5th grade. Throughout the weekend, 25 campers were able to swim, kayak, and canoe in the Wisconsin River. They were also given the opportunity to hike and explore caves on Blackhawk Island, enjoy crafts, campfires, and team building activities. There were 18 junior leaders that served as camp counselors.

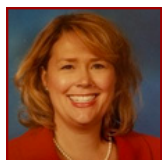
Adventure Camp was also held at Upham Woods Learning Center. Nine members in 6th-8th grade canoed to Blackhawk Island and camped in tents, cooked over campfires and explored the island's trails and caves. A naturalist guided campers throughout the weekend and highlighted the unique ecosystem. Youth were given the opportunity to swim, fish, kayak and canoe in the Wisconsin River, participate in team building activities, and enjoy nature.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

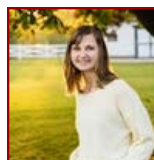
4-H provided a variety of opportunities for youth and adults in 2025. Some program highlights include Art For All, Cloverbud Fun Day, Pollywog Pond Day Camp, Animal Habitat Day Camp, Horse Camp, Club Leader Workshop, Pumpkin Science Night, Night with the Stars, Santa's Workshop, and Holiday Ball.



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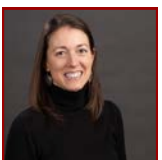
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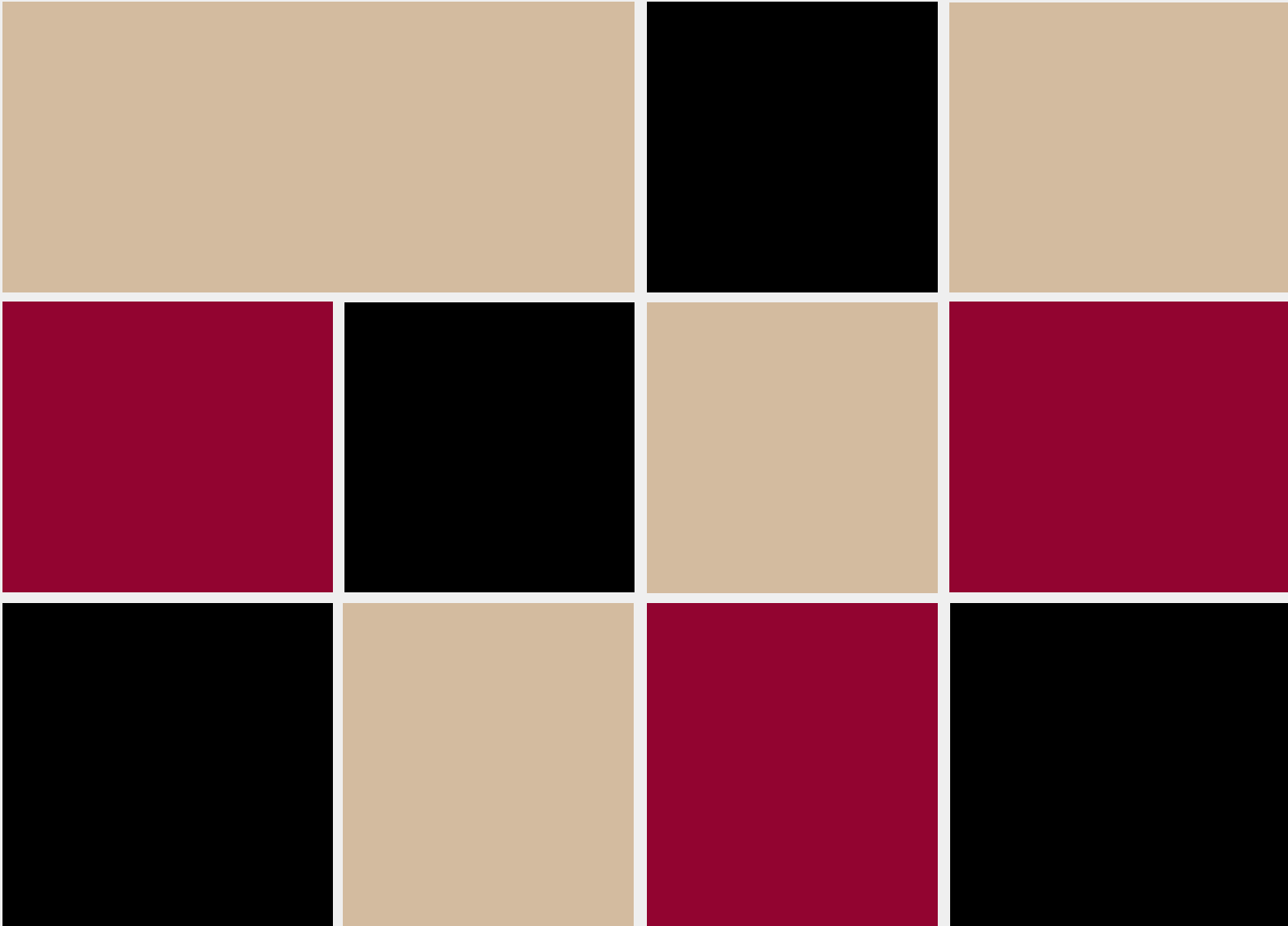
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