

20
23

Impact Report

LA CROSSE COUNTY
UW-EXTENSION OFFICE



Adam Hady,
Area Extension Director

Transforming Communities

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Hello, and let me introduce myself. My name is Adam Hady, and I am the Area Extension Director serving Area 13. Area 13 consists of five counties including Crawford, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland. In 2023 the La Crosse County Extension Office saw some exciting changes including some transitions of the agricultural programming, while the FoodWise program added Emily Yang as the Hmong Nutrition Educator and hired Nicole Eshelman as a Farm to School AmeriCorps worker to develop a long-term transition plan for the program and expand education offerings.

Extension's purpose is to teach, learn, lead, and serve. We do this by connecting people with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and engaging with them

in transforming lives and communities. Our mission is to embody the Wisconsin Idea by partnering to develop and connect the research and educational resources of UW-Madison with residents and communities to address local, statewide and national issues. With this mission our Educators translate research from specialists and faculty at UW-Madison and other Universities into practical solutions for local needs. La Crosse County is served by a strong team that represents five Extension Institutes. These include 4-H/ Positive Youth Development, Agriculture, Human Development and Relationships, Community Development, and FoodWise . In addition to the strong educator team, Kasey Burg and Andrea Northey provide program support.

In 2023, many exciting projects happened with the cooperation of the office educators. Topics ranged from facilitation, work on broadband, compassionate care, food preservation, youth mental health, nutrition security issues, and healthy eating. Extension programs also provided education that built capacity around nonprofits, human services, and community leadership.

If you have questions about what we do, please don't hesitate to ask. I can be reached by email at adam.hady@wisc.edu or by phone at: 608-403-1015.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

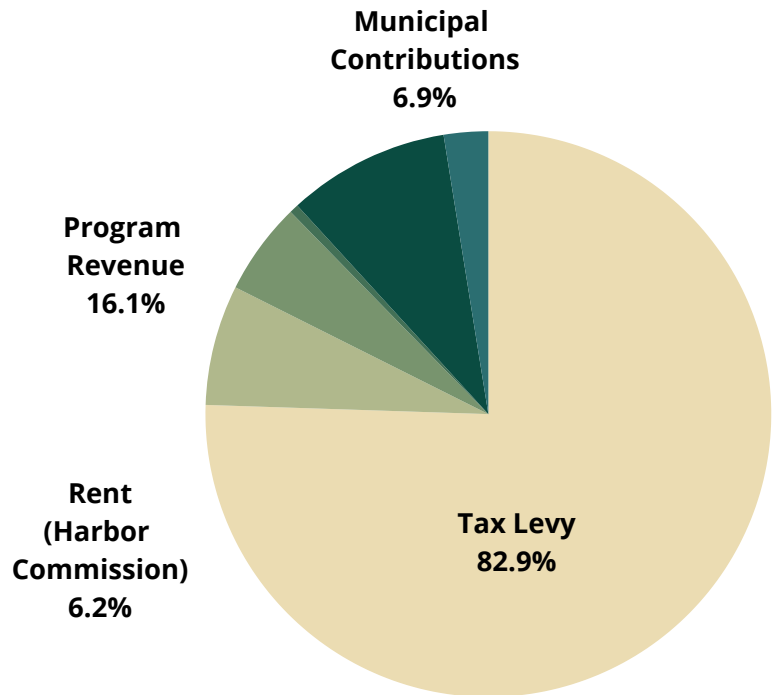
- 4-H program in 2023: **youth enrollment** grew by 6% and brought the number of 4-H youth enrolled to over 500 members.
- The **Farm to School** program received an AmeriCorps Farm to School Specialist through DPI that allowed for expansion, and long-range planning for Farm to School Programs.
- Through efforts of the Community Development Educator and La Crosse County, **37 childcare providers** received grants with a total of just over \$499,000.
- Over the course of 2023 the Human Development and Relationships Program reported **1,240 educational contacts** and worked with nine local partnering organizations including multiple La Crosse County Government Departments, BLACK (Black Leaders Acquiring Collective Knowledge), and the Ho-Chunk Nation.

2023 Finances

REVENUE AND EXPENSES

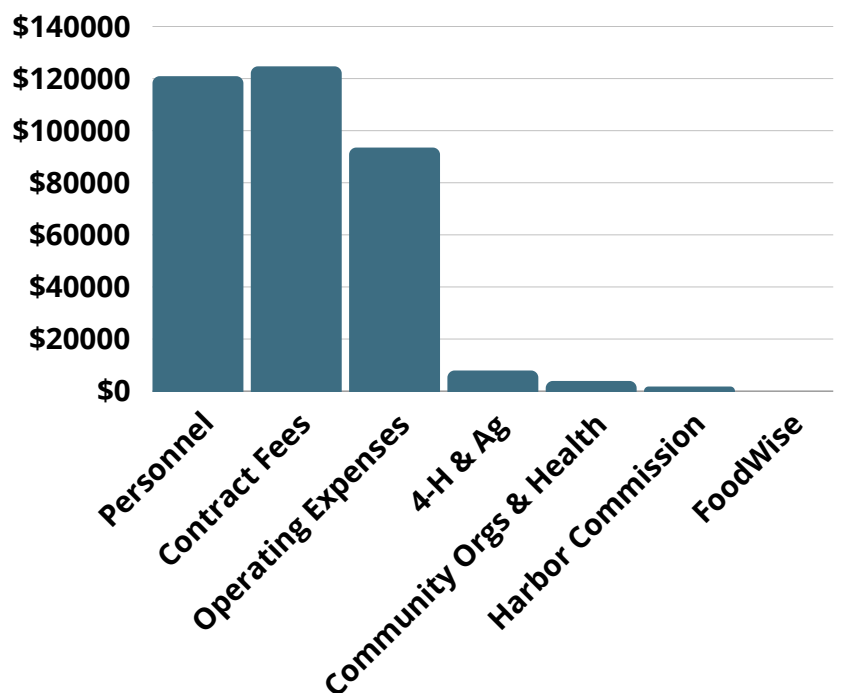
REVENUE

- Tax Levy: \$265,595
- Rent (Harbor Commission): \$24,182
- State Aid/DNR Wildlife: \$18,578
- UW-Extension Revenue: \$1,833
- Municipal Contributions: \$32,600
- Program Revenue (PAT Books, Buoy, 4-H Dues): \$8,909
- **TOTAL: \$351,697**



EXPENSES

- Personnel (Wages and Benefits): \$120,924
- UW-Extension Contract Fees: \$124,700
- Operating Expenses: \$93,518
- 4-H and Ag: \$7,920
- Community Organizations and Health: \$3,909
- Harbor Commission: \$726
- **TOTAL: \$351,697**



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212 6th St. N.,
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4-H Positive Youth Development



Emily Crook, Positive Youth Development Educator

What We Do: Provide meaningful opportunities for all youth and adults to work together to create sustainable community change. This is accomplished within three primary content areas, or mission areas – civic engagement and leadership, healthy living, and science. This includes volunteer management and training, hosting 8-10 county-wide events annually, providing educational resources for clubs and groups, and providing outreach educational resources whenever applicable to our local and state-wide need.

Program Highlights: We had 542 youth enroll – a 6% increase in membership from the year prior, with a 40%* increase in new members. This year we focused on making slight changes to events to better serve the needs of our families. We saw an increase in our Clover College, Expressive Arts, Foods Revue and Achievement Celebration Participation. Our Ambassador group hosted a successful Cloverbud Day Camp in collaboration with Monroe County Ambassadors.

Our retention rate of 4-H members is currently at 80%*, which is the state average rate (*these numbers are skewed by the outreach efforts mentioned below).

Outreach efforts: Emily, along with Kasey and 4-H Ambassador Ruth started a 4-H Classroom Club Project with Deb Sullivan's and Kyle Allen's 2nd grade classes at Northside Elementary. We had 32 second graders who started the first club at Northside – Northside Stars 4-H. Youth were given the opportunity to choose their name, logo, and educational focus at each weekly meeting. By giving these youth the benefits of a traditional 4-H meeting – opportunities to belong, lead and be heard – we saw a 45% drop in behavioral incidents of the 2nd grade class throughout the year. Youth also were able to see their projects exhibited at the La Crosse Interstate Fair, a wonderful testament to the things they can do! Plans for the 2024-2025 year are to continue the 4-H class club while working on recruiting more volunteers for the county and establishing a community club for these youth to join once they finish 2nd grade.



FoodWise Program



Karie Johnson,
FoodWise Coordinator

What We Do: FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We advance healthy eating habits, active lifestyles, and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community, and systems levels. Below are some of our 2023 highlights.



Mary Hoeft-Leithold,
FoodWise Nutrition
Educator

Farm to School: Nicole Eshelman joined Extension and the Coulee Region Farm to School Efforts through DPI and AmeriCorps as the AmeriCorps Farm to School Specialist. Nicole's work focused on engaging students in nutrition education, changing the school food environment, and increasing community capacity. Harvest of the Month initiatives celebrating fruits and vegetables included monthly newsletters, Facebook posts, recipe videos, and in class taste tests. Farm to School efforts have advanced to bring more local foods into schools and classrooms to nourish young bodies and minds.

Head Start: FoodWise Educator Mary Hoeft-Leithold and her encouraging puppet Carrot Top visited 15 Head Start Classrooms and provided lessons to 201 students. Students explored eating a rainbow of colors, tried new foods while going on a vegetable adventure, learned how foods grow, and moved their bodies to be active. To celebrate their learning they had a visit from Extension colleagues dressed as a life-sized Carrot Top on their last day of class.



Emily Yang,
FoodWise Bilingual
Nutrition Educator

GROW: FoodWise partners with a non-profit GROW La Crosse whose mission is to connect youth to healthy food and nature through hands-on, garden-based experiences. GROW maintains and provides programming for nine school gardens in La Crosse and at their greenhouse on the campus of Western Technical College. Middle School and Elementary students participated in field trips to the greenhouse during the winter months. Students learned about plants and created their own plant part diagrams with vegetables which they then tasted. Middle school students visualized a plate of fruits and vegetables that was equal to 1000 calories and created their own rainbow veggie wrap to sample.

Cia Siab, Inc. and Vang Council of La Crosse: FoodWise Bilingual Hmong Educator Emily Yang offered nutrition education lessons to Hmong elders during their day programming at Cia Siab, Inc. Topics included lowering sodium, decreasing sugar-sweetened beverages, healthy eating, and increasing physical activity, making 92 educational contacts. At Vang Council of La Crosse, nutrition education lessons were also given to participants after their line-dancing programming sessions, making an additional 56 educational contacts.

Other Outreach: FoodWise Educators provided a total of nutrition education contacts to 1,830 learners in a variety of other settings (K-12 school settings, low-income housing sites, community gardens, and food pantries) as well as undertaking virtual StrongBodies programming throughout the state virtually and in person.

Agriculture and Horticulture



Sam Bibby
Crops Educator



Kasey Burg
Support Staff



Beth McIlquham
Livestock Educator



Andrea Northey
Support Staff

The **Agriculture Program** in 2023 was vacant for most of the year. The Agriculture Program went through changes in the way Extension delivers agricultural educational opportunities. Moving forward there are now regional educators supporting the needs of La Crosse County's Agricultural community.

The Regional Crops Program is designed to provide timely resources and information to help La Crosse County crop producers and their agricultural consultants manage crops efficiently and profitably. Locally this role is filled by **Sam Bibby**. Sam serves three counties - La Crosse, Vernon, and Crawford. His main office is located here in La Crosse.

The Regional Livestock Program focuses on helping farmers, consumers and allied industry to make informed decisions about beef cattle, poultry, sheep and goats, equine, swine, and meat science.

The Local Educator for this Region is **Beth McIlquham**. Beth serves four counties (La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford and Richland). Her main office is located in Vernon County.

Support Staff - provides advanced administrative and program support to the Extension Department; and provides responsive, courteous, and efficient customer service in support of departmental operations and educational programs.

Community Development



Charlotte Peters,
Community
Development Educator

What we do: The Extension Institute of Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. We work with communities to build the vitality that enhances their quality of life and enriches the lives of their residents. We educate in leadership development, organizational development, food systems, community economic development, local government education and much more. In short, the Community Development Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

2023 Highlights:

Hillview – researched and gave direction on the creation of an intergenerational day center. This will be the first program of this type in the County and will showcase meeting multiple community groups' needs in an innovative and forward-thinking way.

- **Broadband** – served on the Broadband Committee that came together to give direction to County staff on how to approach the broadband needs within the County. Assisted in choosing and then worked closely with consultants who were chosen to survey the County and develop a plan for the County going forward.
- **Childcare** – developed criteria, application process, and tracking program for the childcare grants that were created by ARPA funding. The program awarded 37 providers a total of just over \$499,000.00 dollars.
- Created a **community survey** that was launched at Juneteenth for local group to measure the needs of community members in La Crosse County.
- Facilitated and compiled data from planning sessions for the **Pathways Home** 5-year plan on homelessness which is a joint effort between City and County stakeholders.

Human Development and Relationships



Heather Quackenboss,
Human Development
Educator

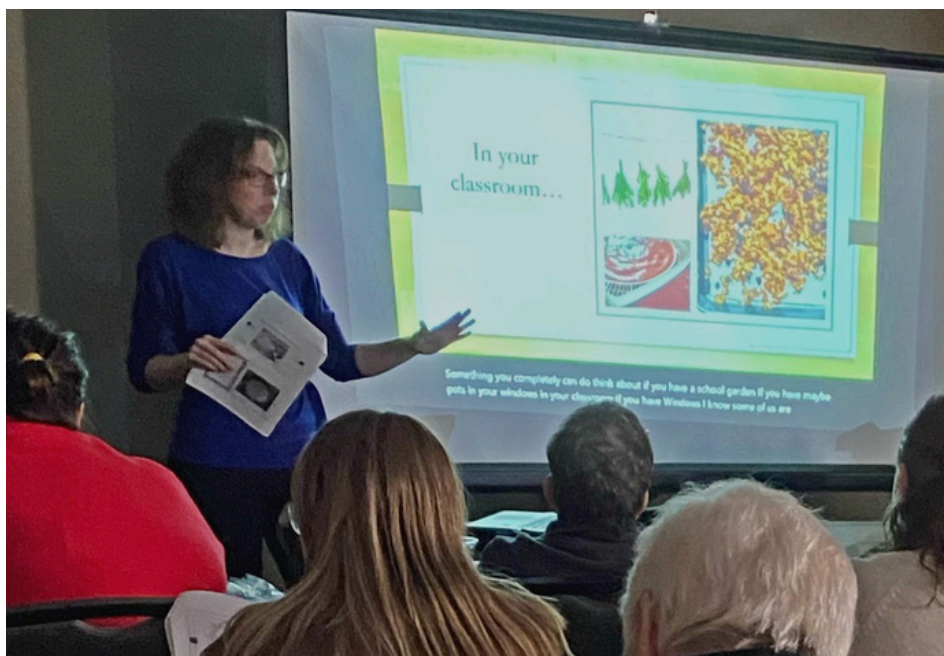
What We Do: The Extension Institute for Human Development & Relationships supports families and communities through programming that encourages growth and understanding. As a source of well-researched information on topics related, family relationships, child development, aging, financial security, food and nutrition security, chronic disease prevention, and mental health promotion. We provide positive and powerful training that works to catalyze positive change in Wisconsin families and communities using research, evidence-based programs, and equitable facilitation skills and tools to meet the county needs.

2023 Highlights:

- Hosted the UW Madison Chancellor, Provost, and Division of Extension Dean to showcase relationship building and educational programs with the **Ho-Chunk Nation**.
- Presented Compassion Resilience and Caregiver Wellbeing to the **Caregiver**

Conference sponsored by La Crosse County Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and local and state Home and Community Educators conferences.

- Expanded **Compassionate County** to organizations within La Crosse County as well as staff from La Crosse County. Compassionate County provides skills and tools to assist us in working with people who are different than us, so we treat others how they wish to be treated.
- Provided strategic facilitation to various groups including **Pathways Home**, a collaboration of La Crosse County, the City of La Crosse, and local organizations who are working to eliminate homelessness and assist people who are unhoused.
- Facilitated programs throughout La Crosse County to reduce **social isolation** and loneliness, especially for older adults.
- **Food preservation** continues to be of interest and staff promotes safe home food processing methods.
- Provided curriculum and education to **Wisconsin Family and Consumer Sciences** educators about safe and culturally relevant food processing and history so that all children, teens, and adults may learn about food from their backgrounds.
- Provided education about having **difficult dialogues**, contentious conversations, and how to progress through conflict within policies, systems, and environments.





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