



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
KENOSHA COUNTY



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Division of Extension Kenosha 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



5,673

Total educational contacts



1,292

FoodWise program participants



747

Youth and adult volunteers enrolled in the 4H program



798

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



Horticulture

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

Teen Task Force Garden Program: An average of seven teens took part in a series of spring season hands-on gardening activities for Teen Task Force members where they learned cultural gardening practices and healthy lifestyles through garden teamwork.

Arbor Day Celebration: Co-coordinated and shared tree planting tips during Arbor Day celebration in partnership with 4-H program, UW-Madison, Division of Climatology, and Kenosha County officials. The event promoted urban trees and their benefit for communities in the current changing climate crisis. 55 people participated in the Arbor Day celebration event, including Kenosha County Board Supervisors (Picture). Free tree saplings were distributed during this event, and participants posted about their experience in planting trees in their backyard.

Spongy Moth Assessment & Management: Assessed and presented the impact of aerial treatment in controlling spongy moth in 34 acres of woodland property in the Town of Randall and outbreak in other woodland areas in Town of Randall. The goal was to provide educational information to public and local elected officials on the impact of invasive spongy moth and to protect natural resources. The educator published local newspaper articles and offered presentations to the public and elected officials.

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

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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Plant Health Advising Program: 798 residents utilized the research-based plant health information service available to Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee County residents. The educator and trained Master Gardener volunteers answered inquiries through email, phone calls, texts, and walk-ins.

Spring into Gardening Conference: Nearly 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 Kenosha 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 Kenosha 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 Kenosha County, as well as introducing on-farm variety trials from our University of Wisconsin-Madison Emerging Crops Accelerator program.





Community Development

The Extension Institute of Community Development provides educational programming to assist leaders, communities, and organizations realize their fullest potential. The Institute plants and cultivates the seeds for thriving communities and organizations.

Housing: UW Extension partnered with Kenosha County and the Kenosha Area Business Alliance to create the Kenosha County Housing Taskforce. During the kickoff meeting, Extension educators presented and moderated an engaging conversation surrounding housing throughout Kenosha County to around 50 important stakeholders. This is a county-wide initiative to achieve housing throughout Kenosha County. As a follow-up to this meeting, the Extension Educator attended the WHEDA Annual Conference and is planning Housing Taskforce Working Group Meetings during 2025.

Supporting Entrepreneurship: The Extension Educator created an entrepreneurial resource page for residents of Kenosha County to engage with new and existing resources to support their business at any part of their entrepreneurial journey. Extension hosted various programs on a variety of entrepreneurial topics, such as failure in entrepreneurship and expanding the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Expanding Broadband: Extension liaised between the county and state resources throughout their broadband journey. These tasks include aiding in the BEAD Challenge Process for municipalities across Kenosha County, supporting regional planning workshops, utilizing ARPA funds, engaging with stakeholders, and attending broadband advisory meetings.

Data Distribution: Extension assisted in collecting and sharing community development data for community partners this past year. This sharing was done through the creation and distribution of an economic indicator report, survey analysis, and presentations to important stakeholders.





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.

Kenosha Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency Program: 18 participants engaged in a financial education program where participants of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program with the Kenosha Housing Authority learned about FSS program parameters and updates, budgeting, and credit history. This program is intended to help participants set and reach goals through their individual FSS plan.

Financial Coaching Program at The Sharing Center: 24 people participated in a coaching program for families and individuals where participants learned how to create financial goals and gained money management skills. Participants created their own plans to manage expenses, pay off debts, save money for emergencies, and reach their financial goals.

Kenosha Correctional Center: A collaboration with a local prison to give opportunity for incarcerated adults to identify specific community resource needs before release to assist successful reentry efforts. Provided financial education to 53 participants on topics such as budgeting, credit/debt, record keeping, saving on groceries, goal setting, preventing fraud and scams, and finding affordable housing.

Rent Smart Train-the-Trainer: 201 participants completed training designed to help social workers and other community service providers facilitate the Rent Smart program effectively in their own organizations and communities.

Rent Smart: 158 people participated in this program that focused on the knowledge and skills essential for a successful renting experience. It challenged participants to know and understand their rights and responsibilities as a tenant as well as know and understand the rights and responsibilities of their landlord.

Money Smart in Head Start in Kenosha County (KUSD and Westosha): A newsletter series for parents of young children where they learned skills such as using credit wisely, keeping their money safe, savings strategies, organizing their financial records, and making choices about health insurance. Through this program, parents can create more financial stability for their families.

Safe Kids Strong Families Kenosha County 2024: Annual local campaign for all Kenosha County residents where they learned about protective factors, local resources for families, and other strategies to strengthen caregiver capacity. The goal of this event was to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect and promote strong families in the community.

Other Programs/Initiatives Include: Stress Management Training with Community Impact Foster Parents and Mental Health First Aid with Department of Natural Resources Staff.





Positive Youth Development

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

Youth In Governance (YIG): For the 2023-2024 cohort, all 18 YIG representatives were recognized for their service during the Recognition Ceremony in May 2024. The Extension educator along with Planning, Development, and Extension Education Committee members interviewed and recruited 16 youths for the 2024-2025 year. Some program highlights include Extension-hosted skills-building meetings and the handbook project review. Additionally, this YIG cohort explored potential service project opportunities during their term.

Youth As Resource (YAR): For the 2023-2024 YAR year, the youth-adult board awarded seven grants to different youth-led community service projects in Kenosha County. For the fall of 2024, the YAR board has completed two volunteer opportunities to serve the Kenosha County community. Additionally, board members have had regular committee meetings outside of monthly board meetings for grant promotion. In November, the YAR Board invited a Kenosha community leader to speak about the difficulties people in the community are enduring in relation to unmet housing needs.

College & Career Readiness: In November, the Extension Educator partnered with the Latino Empowerment Group at Bradford High School for a college visit to Marquette University. Twenty-seven students received a tour of campus and an admissions presentation. Additionally, they ate lunch on campus and received a dorm tour of a living-learning community. Students visited the Career Center and Academic Student Success Center where they learned about resources available to students on campus as well as good studying and time management skills for college students.





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: Kenosha County has 8 community clubs that meet once a month. Club meetings are educational, recreational, and service-oriented. Community service is a vital part of 4-H. Throughout the year, members collected bedding and built beds for those who don't have them. Youths made blankets to be used by first responders, shelters, and Children's Hospital. Clubs regularly have food and toy drives, clean parks and cemeteries, and ring Salvation Army bells during the holiday season. One of our clubs led a flower arranging workshop for assisted living residents.

4-H Projects: We offer 19 countywide projects including 7 animal projects. Project meetings focus on learning a specific skill and giving youths opportunities to try new things. Kenosha County youths can try archery, fishing, sewing, cooking, photography, model rocketry, dog training, and so much more! They can also learn to take care of livestock and smaller animals like poultry and rabbits.

4-H Volunteers: The 4-H mission is to empower youth to reach their full potential working and learning in partnership with caring adults. We had 100 adult volunteers in 2024. As our programs grow, we are always in need of more caring adults to share their knowledge and skills with our youth. Volunteers help make 4-H possible. To volunteer, you don't need to have previous experience working with youth. The most important qualification is a desire to work with young people to help them learn new things and gain life skills in a positive, safe, and welcoming environment.

4-H Events: Youth participated in the Kenosha County 4-H Pinewood Derby, four camps, and several statewide and nationwide 4-H opportunities such as art camps and American Spirit, a 10 day bus trip to historical sites.

Kenosha County Fair: Kenosha 4-H youths get to show off what they have learned at the Kenosha County Fair. It is an exciting time where the members practice working together, supporting and encouraging each other, responsibility, and communication. The clubs work together to run a pop and pizza stand to raise money for the county 4-H program.

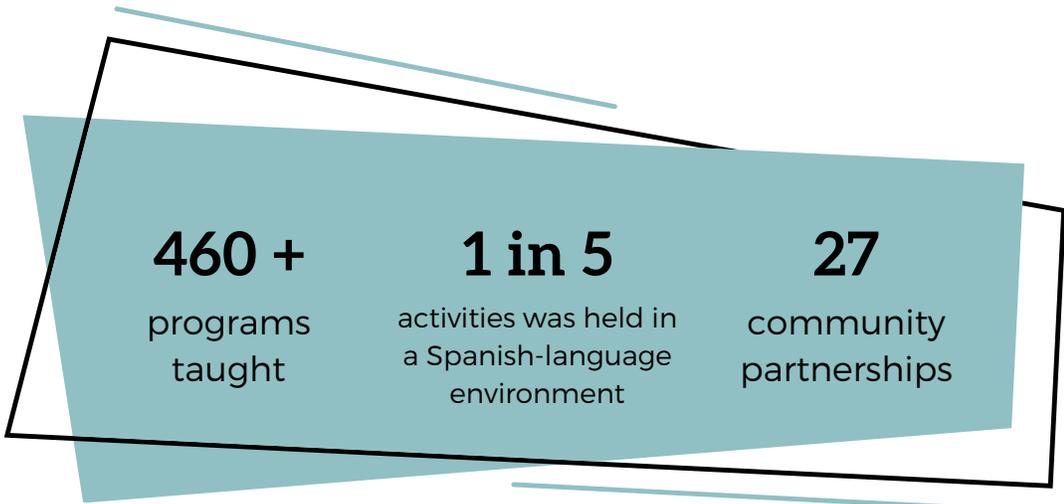




Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives

The University of Madison, Division of Extension Kenosha and Racine 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 Kenosha community.

Reaching Youth Audiences: FoodWise educators reached a wide array of audiences through our Kenosha County partners during 2024. We were able to reach youth audiences (preschool through high school) through our partnership with the Kenosha Unified School District. For example, in March, *Teen Cuisine* was taught at Reuther High School to 30 students. In April, one of our educators presented the *Food Day* curriculum to 4th graders at Curtis Strange Elementary School and presented the *Color Me Healthy* curriculum to 38 preschoolers in Westosha. In September, educators did a tabling event at Brass Elementary during their Back-to-School Health Fair.



Community Outreach: Our educators did outreach and tabling events with our partners at the Shalom Center and Sharing Center in September. FoodWise also presented our *Food Smarts* curriculum at the Kenosha Achievement Center’s Gardening Works program and *MyPlate for My Family* at the Shalom Center. In February and March, FoodWise held a 7-week *Eating Smart, Being Active* class at Kenosha Area Family and Aging Services, Inc. (KAFASI) for seven parents who are Habitat for Humanity of Kenosha County (future) homeowners.

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