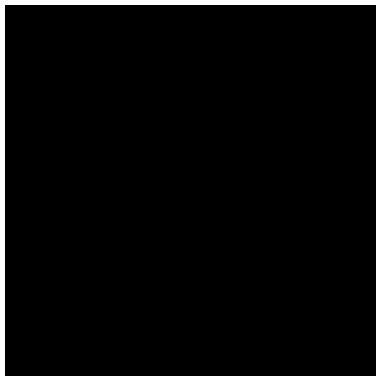




Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
KENOSHA COUNTY



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Division of Extension Kenosha 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
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2025 AT A GLANCE

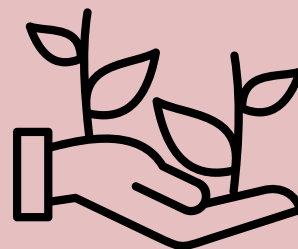


6,500+

Total educational contacts

104

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



725

Youth and adult volunteers enrolled in
the 4-H program

1,114

FoodWise program participants



97

Outreach Planning/Activities





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 that 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.

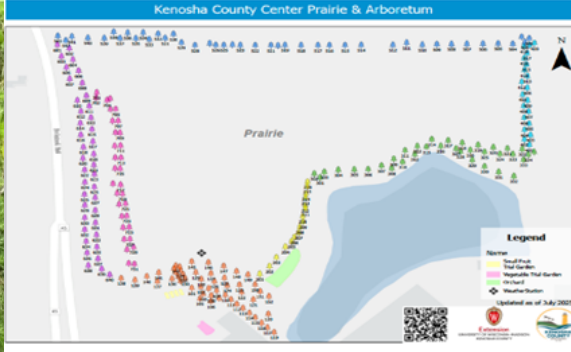
FUNDING

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.



HORTICULTURE



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.

DEMONSTRATION

At the Kenosha County Center Arboretum, demonstration trials in assessing drought tolerant tree species and small fruit variety trials were planned and installed over the past five years (2020 – 2025). More than 250 tree species were planted in the arboretum, and a comprehensive visual assessment will be conducted in 2026. A bareroot tree planting publication guide for homeowners was published by the Horticulture Educator.

Several small fruit crops were planted in raised beds at the Kenosha County Center, which include blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberry, aronia, and lingonberry that were assessed for performance and yield. The blueberry varietal performance in raised beds included yield and sugar contents. Based on the three-year trial study, the Horticulture 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.

TEACHING

In partnership with the Kenosha Public Library, the educator taught *Gardening for Beginners*, comprised of ten garden sessions over a ten-month period. On average, 25 people attended all the sessions. A comment from one of the program participants about the fruit growing session is, “...it was incredibly informative and I learned many things I didn't know about apple trees and how they grow.”

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.





HOUSING

The Kenosha County Housing Task Force, a countywide effort working to bring together community members to develop tools and solutions to address the housing shortage for all income levels, continued to grow this year. The Task Force developed three working groups: Financial Tools, PZD (planning, zoning, and design standards), and Promotions (public education, communication, and marketing). Each of these working groups took key points from the initial task force meeting and created action plans. These action plans were shared with the full Task Force in June, along with housing education. Outputs created this year from this action plan include the Kenosha County Housing Task Force webpage, Kenosha County Housing Task Force Overview Sheet, and Residential Planning and Zoning workshop. The Residential Planning and Zoning workshop was attended by 16 elected officials and examined how zoning may be prohibiting housing and how it could be modified to support the workforce. It was taught in partnership with an Extension specialist at the Center for Land Use Education. The work of the Task Force was shared during multiple public speaking opportunities, including TEMPO Kenosha's August Luncheon, the Kenosha County Council of Governments, and the WHEDA Conference 2025: How Housing Happens. Planning for a Southeastern Wisconsin Housing Summit in the spring of 2026 began in 2025.

EXPANDING ENTREPRENEURIAL RESOURCES

The Business Life Cycle Resource webpage was launched and serves as a roadmap for entrepreneurs at all stages of their entrepreneurial journey to connect with resources in their community. Free virtual webinars for local entrepreneurs on video marketing, small business pricing, and access to capital were hosted in collaboration with the Kenosha Public Library.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

Served as the secretary, media chair, and steering committee member of Future Leaders in Kenosha (FLIK), the young professional networking group created as a program of the Kenosha Area Chamber of Commerce. This group helps create a sense of place for individuals under 40, helping them feel seen and valued through a series of networking opportunities, learning sessions, and business tours.

DATA COLLECTION

Facilitated the collection of community data through the creation and analysis of a downtown appeal survey shared with students attending universities located in Kenosha County.

AWARDS

The Kenosha Area Business Alliance announced the educator as one of its 2026 Future Five Ovation Award recipients.





A TRANSITIONAL YEAR

In 2025, FoodWise in Kenosha 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 Kenosha County. EFNEP-funded nutrition education programs will continue in Kenosha 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 23 community organizations including schools, youth programs, Head Start programs, senior programs, and food pantries to engage 1,114 participants (811 in SNAP-Ed, 303 in EFNEP) in English and Spanish in a variety of settings in Kenosha County.

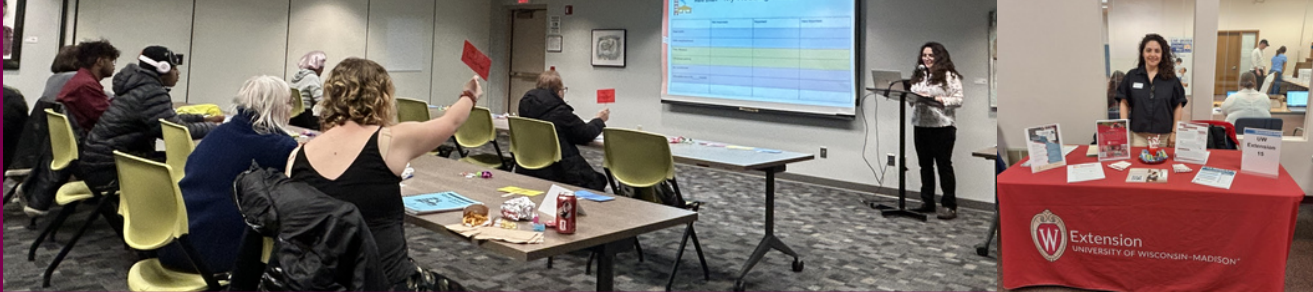
2025 FOODWISE BY THE NUMBERS

- Collaborated with 30 Kenosha Head Start classrooms teaching the *Color Me Healthy* curriculum to 412 youth, involving young children in nutrition lessons and taste tests of colorful fruits and vegetables and sending home reinforcing messages to caregivers in English and Spanish.
- Taught 121 fourth graders using the *Food Day* curriculum, helping kids to understand whole foods, processed foods, and ways to incorporate healthy whole food choices into their day.
- Reached 175 food pantry guests with monthly educational materials and quarterly on-site education and recipes, helping families to incorporate pantry foods and the “Spice of the Month” into healthy meals.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

FoodWise reached future homeowners with two 9-lesson series of *Eating Smart & Being Active* lessons that centered around nutrition and budgeting topics. Lessons featured prep of a healthy meal or snack recipe and simple physical activities. Pre/Post surveys showed that 92% of participants improved in diet quality/nutrition and 100% improved in food resource management behaviors such as meal planning and budget-friendly shopping practices. Participants reported gaining helpful ideas for meal planning and increased commitment to staying active. One participant reported excitement about coming away with updated dinner recipes, which they now felt more confident implementing in their daily life.





KENOSHA HOUSING AUTHORITY FAMILY SELF SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

A financial education program, where 28 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.

RENT SMART

Rent Smart focuses on the knowledge and skills essential for a successful renting experience. It challenges 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. Over 150 individuals participated in the Rent Smart program during 2025.

ONE-ON-ONE FINANCIAL COACHING

A coaching program for adults where 12 participants learned how to create financial goals and gain money management skills. Participants created their own financial plans to manage expenses, pay off debts, and save money for emergencies and to reach their financial goals.

MONEY SMART IN HEAD START IN KENOSHA COUNTY (KUSD AND WESTOSHA)

A newsletter series for parents of young children where they learn 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.

OTHER PROGRAMS/INITIATIVES

- Money as You Grow with Community Impact Foster Parents
- Money Matters with Habitat for Humanity
- Budgeting: Making a Spending Plan with ELEVATE participants
- Planning AHEAD with the Kenosha Public Library System and Westosha Head Start.





YOUTH AS RESOURCES (YAR)

In the spring of 2025, YAR Board members invited two guest speakers from Kenosha County. Angela Havron and Michelle Hernandez trained YAR Board members in Narcan administration and shared information on drug misuse. Kelly Armstrong, President of the Kenosha Innovation Neighborhood (KIN), spoke to YAR Board leaders about the new neighborhood and partnership between area businesses, universities, and local high schools and her career pathway. The YAR Board awarded seven grants for a total of \$3,500 to youth leaders completing community service projects. In May 2025, the YAR Board welcomed seven new Board members as graduating senior leaders transitioned out of the program. The YAR Board year kicked off with a tabling event at the Kenosha County Fair in August and onboarding began in September.

YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE (YIG)

The YIG program is a local civic engagement program in partnership with Kenosha County where youth develop their civic knowledge and grow their communication and collaboration skills. In May of 2025, the Kenosha County Board recognized twelve YIG representatives' service during their 2024-2025 term. Additionally, sixteen youth were appointed to the Kenosha County Board Committees for the 2025-2026 YIG cohort. In June, fourteen new YIG members participated in the annual YIG bus tour, where they toured county facilities, met Kenosha County leaders and staff, and learned about how the county functions.

YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN CIVIC LEADERSHIP

The annual YPCL conference is a youth leadership weekend for Wisconsin youth to meet other youth leaders from different groups, participate in youth-and-adult-led workshops, and develop an action plan to implement in their local community. Two youth leadership groups from Kenosha County attended. One Kenosha County youth represented the YAR Board. Her Board role includes serving on the Media Committee. At YPCL, she volunteered to document conference activities through the weekend with university-provided camera equipment and developed her professional skills.

SUPPORTING COLLEGE AND CAREER ACCESS

In April of 2025, Extension Kenosha County organized a visit to UW-Madison for first-generation high school youth. Twenty-six youth participated in a campus tour and financial information session. Youth also met with a university student group to learn more about campus life and how to access resources and support systems while at college.

Additionally, our Nia North Carolina site partners visited Kenosha County to lead engaging activities with current students immersed in campus life. Eleven undergraduate and graduate Nia student interns hosted a student panel talking about their educational journeys to 175 Kenosha high school youth. In the afternoon, the Nia interns led an interactive social-emotional activity to thirty middle school youth.





WHAT IS 4-H?

Kenosha 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, Kenosha County's 4-H enrollment was 725 members including 129 adult volunteers. Because volunteers are the cornerstone of 4-H, an inaugural Volunteer Summit was held in conjunction with Racine County 4-H in March of 2025. Volunteers attended educational workshops and attended a resource fair to provide them with new ideas and tools to use in their programming, clubs, and project meetings.

CLUBS AND PROJECTS

All 4-H youth attend club and project meetings. There are 8 community clubs and 20 countywide projects in Kenosha County. Club meetings are educational, recreational, and service-oriented. Project meetings focus on learning a specific skill such as archery, fishing, sewing, cooking, photography, model rocketry, dog training, and large and small animal care.

KENOSHA COUNTY FAIR

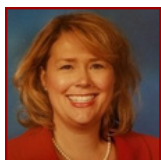
Many youth choose to exhibit what they learn in 4-H at the Kenosha County Fair. Participating in the fair allows youth to practice responsibility, teamwork, sportsmanship, communication, and more. At the 2025 fair, the 4-H Swine Project started a new program called Pig Pals. In this program, 4-H youth work with young people with disabilities to give them an inclusive and immersive fair experience. 4-H youth teach their "pals" about swine and how to show the pigs at the fair. The program ends with the pals working together to show a pig in the show ring. The event was a huge success.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Another highlight of the year was the Kenosha County 4-H Festival of Trees. In November, youth of all ages, adult volunteers, and club and project leaders hosted this event for the community. Over 400 guests made crafts, visited Santa, had cookies and cocoa, and viewed 24 trees decorated in the themes of 4-H projects.



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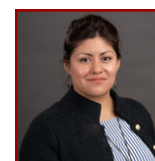


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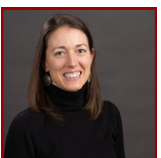
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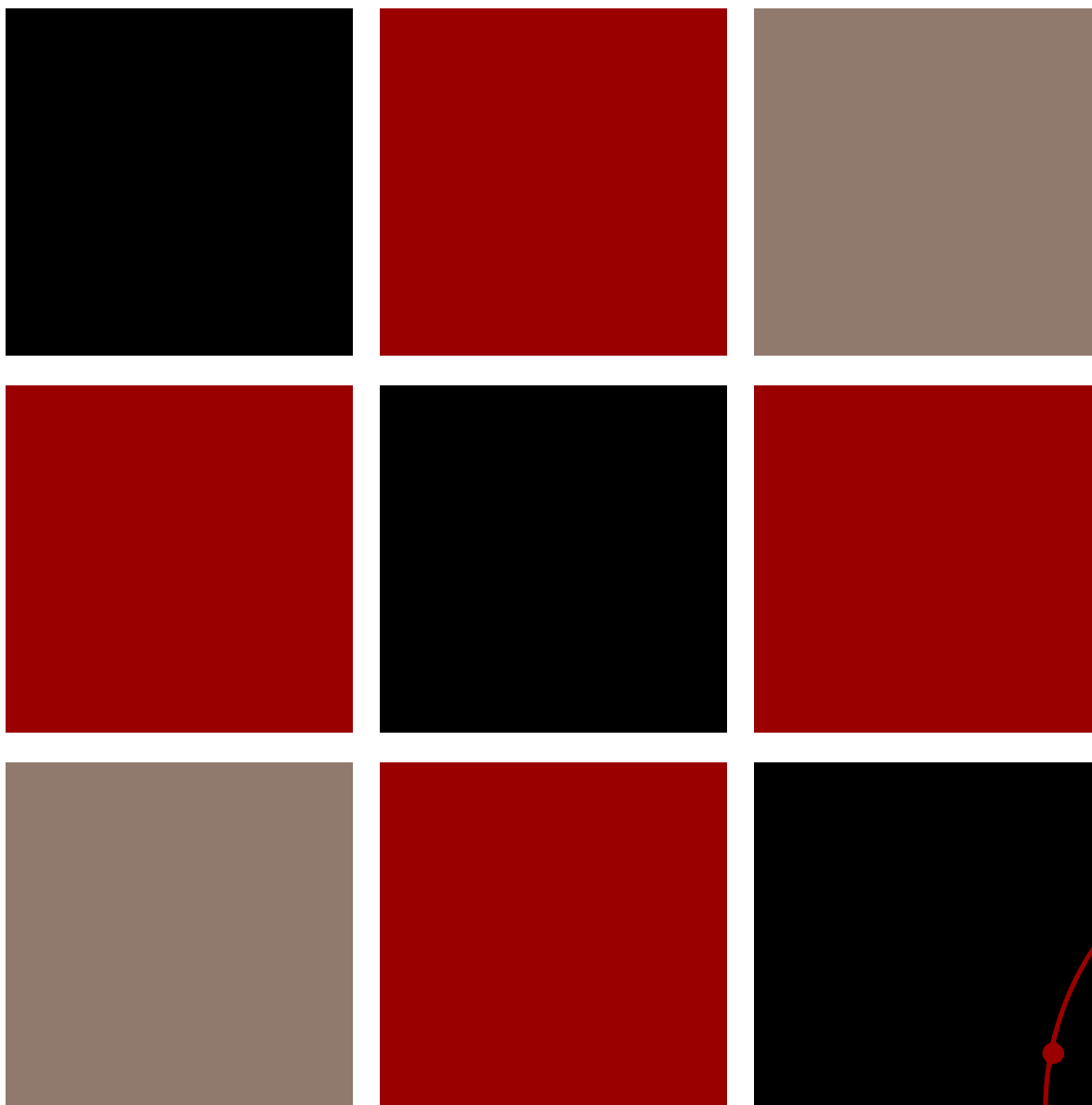


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