Our Mission . . .

Deliver research-based information to improve the quality of life for families in the areas of agriculture, community, family, and youth development.

UW-Extension extends the knowledge and resources of the University of Wisconsin to people where they live and work.

2014 in review . . .

Building resource capacity
Enhancing economic development
Empowering people in their communities

Building Resource Capacity

- Twenty-three new volunteers completed the Master Gardener Basic Training in 2014. The Outagamie County Master Gardener Association (OCMGA) currently has 124 active members. This past year, 113 state certified volunteers provided 11,017 hours of support and education to the Fox Cities area; and members of the OCMGA increased their own knowledge by completing an additional 3,024 hours of continuing education.

- The Outagamie County Master Food Preservers conducted lunch and learns, special interest workshops and hands-on workshops involving seven volunteers and more than 145 people. The hands-on workshops included: Jammin’ to the Blueberries, Saucy Salsa, and Come on Deer Let’s Eat! Educational programs were delivered at Thrivent, Appleton Public Library, Salvation Army, and the UW Extension office.

- The Outagamie County 4-H Outreach Committee focused on introducing and promoting 4-H programs through community events, promotional fliers, media promotion, and the 4-H Action Center at the county fair. Promotional 4-H yard signs were distributed to 4-H member families throughout the county, and they were encouraged to display the signs during the September annual enrollment period through the end of National 4-H Week in October.

- The seasonal horticulture educator was a member of the state horticulture team working to develop professional programs for internal extension staff, update state garden fact sheets, collect regional data on the potato beetle, and develop information on straw bale gardening.

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Weekly alalfa-fungicide evaluation project was concluded. From 2012-2014, the impact of two fungicides, Headline and Quadris, had on alfalfa yield and quality was tested. The project results reveal a highly variable response to yield and no local significant difference in quality. Local and state results suggest that applications will only pay for themselves about 15-22% of the time.

Outagamie County 4-H Youth Development partnered with Outagamie County libraries in the summer of 2014 to offer robotics programs to youth in grades 4-6. A two-hour program was offered at each of seven participating libraries serving a total of 137 youth. During the program youth had the opportunity to build and program LEGO NXT robots while focusing on soft skills development including teamwork, communication, and organization.

More than 150 people attended the 13th annual Money Conference at Fox Valley Technical College and learned more about basic money management and planning for their future. Sessions were offered for both youth and adults on topics such as: credit reports, retirement planning, identity theft, and record keeping. The mascots from sponsoring agencies visited the youth during lunch. UW-Extension’s Moola the Cash Cow is shown on the right.

UW-Extension teamed up with Little Chute Business Association (LCBA), Village of Little Chute, Heart of the Valley Chamber of Commerce, WI Department of Tourism, and Fox Cities Convention & Visitors Bureau to stage a Hospitality & Customer Service workshop in Little Chute. It attracted 30 participants in the lead-up to the “soft opening” of the new Dutch windmill attraction. Afterwards, LCBA created a visitor map that highlights area attractions and helps visitors find their way around the community.

UW-Extension of Outagamie and Brown Counties arranged a tour of UW-Oshkosh bio-digester facilities, attended by 26 elected and appointed officials. An informal contact group to jointly explore bio-energy development has been created; it expects to work with the more formal Energy workgroup sponsored by North Central.

The National Dairy FARM program was offered twice in the state of Wisconsin with 22 individuals and nine companies sending representatives to be trained as evaluators. More dairy farms will now be able to be evaluated on animal care and well-being by those who are newly trained. Evaluators are trained in scoring cows for hygiene, hock and knee lesions, locomotion scoring, and body condition scoring. Farms are evaluated and then encouraged to develop a continual improvement plan. Responses to questions about animal health and well-being are loaded into a data base to help share the message of good production practices farmers use in caring for their animals.

The Outagamie County Master Gardener Association (OCMGA) hosted the annual Wisconsin Master Gardener Association (WIMGA) Annual State Conference in 2014. While the WIMGA Annual State Conference is about education, camaraderie, and volunteerism, it is important to note that this conference served as a significant financial event as well. More than 450 attendees spent two days enjoying what downtown Appleton has to offer. After the event, the OCMGA provided $6,667 to support the efforts and outreach that WIMGA offers to Master Gardeners volunteers statewide.

The UW-Extension supported Sustainable Communities Network (SCN) of the Fox Valley and served as an educational partner on a series of speaking events featuring renowned Swedish sustainability planner and author Torbjorn Lahti. Ninety-six people attended his public presentation and an associated sustainability networking fair at UW-Fox Valley. Thirty-three elected/appointed officials learned about Lahti’s municipal sustainability strategies at SCA Tissue in the Town of Menasha. Over 50 people and businesses learned sustainable business strategies from Lahti at a UW-Oshkosh session.

A Caregiver Cafe pilot project was offered at two sites in the fall of 2014 reaching 45 family caregivers and professionals. The program plans to expand to other communities in 2015.

The Village of Hortonville has created a senior task force that has conducted a needs assessment for program development and has started to offer community events and programs for the senior citizens in the area. These sessions are being held in the new community center that opened in the summer of 2014.

The 4-H Youth and Family Development Coordinator worked with four volunteer mentors to support the Outagamie County 4-H Youth Leaders Association. There were 86 youth enrolled in the youth leadership project. They participated in community service events including playing bingo with residents at Brewster Village, cleaning up garbage around Black Otter Lake in Hortonville, and helping with an Operation Military Kids event.

The Outagamie County 4-H Dog Project is fortunate to have a very robust group of volunteer leaders who have designed and implemented a 12-week training program to help members train their dogs in preparation for the county fair dog show. Seven dedicated volunteers focused on training in showmanship, obedience, and agility to prepare youth and dogs from beginner to advanced learning levels. During the 2014 project year, 44 members participated in the training and about one-quarter were first year members. The program has been very well received by participants and over 85% of the members remain in the dog project for four or more years.

The UW-Extension office provided education and outreach to 1,431 individuals who sought help with their horticultural inquiries during the 2014 growing season. Horticultural questions and concerns were answered in the form of phone calls, emails, walk-ins, and site visits. The UW-Extension office offers assistance and information to homeowners and horticultural professionals in cooperation with the Outagamie County Master Gardener Association.

The first annual Bacon Contest was held November 1, 2014 with 19 youth completing the three educational sessions. Youth learned that what they feed pigs affects how the pork tastes; how to process pork bellies; and the cutting, curing, and smoking of pork products. Attendees were able to sample eight different bacon flavors submitted by the youth and then they voted for their favorite flavors. Youth learned valuable new skills in food safety, product taste, and quality. Learned skills increased. The three sessions received high evaluations.