



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

Taylor County Jan/Feb 2026 Highlight Report

Extension Mission: *We teach, learn, lead, and serve, connecting the University of Wisconsin, and engaging with them in transforming lives and communities.*

Community Development/Strong Bodies

PROVIDES EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING TO ASSIST
LEADERS, COMMUNITIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS REALIZE
THEIR FULLEST POTENTIAL.

MICHELLE GRIMM, EDUCATOR



Michelle Grimm –
.8 FTE CDI
.2 FTE Strong Bodies
Coordinator

StrongPeople Volunteer Training in Taylor County

Michelle strengthened StrongPeople programming by providing advanced training for 12 dedicated community volunteers who continue to serve as an essential part of the county's wellness efforts. The training reinforced volunteer readiness and supported the delivery of safe, high-quality health programs for residents.

As part of the county's ongoing commitment to participant safety and program excellence, **volunteers completed CPR Certification and Mandated Reporter Training.** These components ensure that StrongPeople leaders are equipped to respond appropriately in emergency situations and understand their responsibilities in protecting vulnerable individuals.

This continued investment in volunteer development enhances the county's capacity to offer evidence-based health and wellness opportunities, while supporting a resilient network of experienced volunteers who are deeply committed to the well-being of Taylor County residents.

Tech Talk Seminar

The REC Center requested support from Michelle to offer a technology class tailored for older adults in the community. In response, Michelle partnered with **Grant Bub, Taylor County Broadband Manager**, to develop and deliver a hands-on Tech Talk session focused on building digital confidence and improving personal online security.

To meet the needs of participants, Michelle refined an existing curriculum to create an interactive, easy-to-follow workshop. The session will emphasize practical skills, including how to create and manage safe, strong passwords, recognize common online risks, and use simple tools to stay secure.



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

Agriculture

PROVIDING RESEARCH-BASED LIVESTOCK AND FARM
BUSINESS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND
DECISION-MAKING TOOLS TO FARMERS AND
AGRIBUSINESSES.

SANDY STUTTGEN, EDUCATOR



Sandy Stuttgen – Faculty
.8 FTE

NCWCA Winter Event

Sixty-seven cow-calf producers attended Sandy's *Pregnancy Diagnosis for Improving Reproductive Performance* at the *NCWCA Winter Event* held in Stetsonville on January 17th. The program evaluation asked them to rate their knowledge about this topic before and after hearing it using a 5-point Likert Scale. **A 0.8-point improvement was calculated from the 23 returned evaluation (34% response rate).** Comments about what they intend to use from the presentation included using pregnancy diagnostics (written three times), adding blood testing for pregnancy detection and calf bumping; while others plan to discuss with their family team first, herd is not big enough to warrant pregnancy diagnostics and other plans to 'stick with using the vet'.

Sandy uses Likert-scale evaluations to measure changes in participants' understanding after her sessions. A 5-point Likert scale measures how strongly people agree or disagree with statements about their understanding, from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (5). The pattern of answers shows whether participants felt similarly or had very different opinions. She calculates a weighted average because each point on the 5-point scale represents a different number of people selecting that rating, and weighting ensures the final score reflects the actual distribution of responses rather than treating all categories as equally. By comparing their before and after scores, Sandy can see whether their understanding improved, stayed the same, or decreased if something wasn't clear. Any positive change shows growth in understanding, and higher point increases reflect greater gains. Smaller increases often happen when participants have already rated their understanding high before the session. Zero changes indicate their understanding stayed the same and negative changes indicate understanding decreased or something wasn't clear.

Save a Calf, Save a Cow Workshop

Fifteen individuals, including 5 Hispanic dairy workers, attended the Save a Calf, Save a Cow-Dairy Workshop that Sandy facilitated in Medford on February 11. With a 93% response rate for both Dairy Transition Cow Nutrition and Newborn Calf Care and Colostrum Management sessions, the weighted



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

average understanding increased from 2.8 before the session to 3.5 after, reflecting a consistent +0.7-point gain on the 5-point Likert scale. This smaller increase is attributed to the participants rating their understanding high before the sessions (3.8 and 3.5 respectfully). When asked what they found most useful, **85.7% cited the obstetric model practice and 42.9% the calving kit demonstration.** One respondent wrote that they learned a lot from the colostrum testing demonstration. Evaluation comments include learned more about dry cow nutrition; learned lots about delivery of calves; proper way to use a calf jack; pulling a calf/chaining them; learning how to feel for a calf and orientation of it in the cow; I learned more dry cow managements; colostrum quality and long-term effects; more confidence in calving assistance. Respondents also listed topics they would like to see at future calving workshops, and one wrote, 'make classes longer and even more extensive.'

Wisconsin Idea Conference

Sandy and her colleagues will present ***Do all calves get the same start? Partnering with dairy farmers to explore colostrum management differences for retained and non-retained calves*** at the WI Idea Conference in Madison on March 3rd. Their session contributes to the Wisconsin Idea Conference by showcasing a creative, data-driven partnership between Extension educators and farmers. It highlighted how collaborative research can uncover management gaps, challenge assumptions, and lead to actionable recommendations. Attendees will learn about the logistical and communication challenges of conducting on-farm research, reinforcing the conference's commitment to community collaboration, practical impact, and inclusive approaches to transformational education.



The Wisconsin Idea Conference seeks to bring together community-minded people from across the Madison area to discuss creative, mutually beneficial approaches to community-university partnership. The conference reaffirms the importance of collaborating across organizations to make a positive impact in our shared neighborhoods on issues that matter to residents.

This type of community-driven, applied work is at the core of the Wisconsin Idea and the larger founding mission of higher education across the United States. The conference is a multi-disciplinary celebration of the Wisconsin Idea and the relationships it fosters.

<https://morgridge.wisc.edu/events/wisconsin-idea-conference/>



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

Wisconsin 4-H



UW-MADISON EXTENSION



Julie Diepenbrock -
.5 FTE

TAYLOR COUNTY 4-H HAS OVER 200 YOUTH AND ADULTS WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP TO PROVIDE YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN LEADERSHIP AND LIFE SKILLS.

JULIE DIEPENBROCK, EDUCATOR

Monthly Community 4-H Club Meetings

Young people throughout Taylor County are among the next generation of community leaders. Young people in every community need experiences where they are engaged in learning activities that are meaningful to them and where they learn to help contribute to their community.

Monthly community 4-H club meetings help youth develop positive relationships with peers and adults and often include service projects throughout the year.

Taylor County 4-H youth experience a sense of belonging that supports positive mental health. Involvement in a community **4-H club helps enable youth to strengthen important life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and responsibility and strengthen their leadership skills and deepen their commitment to serving their community.**



*Valentines being distributed to Our House Assisted Living
By Taylor County Countrysiders 4-H Club*

Annual Leadership Training

During the Annual Leadership Training, 4-H members and leaders expressed concerns about declining club enrollment, noting challenges such as small membership numbers, difficulty recruiting new youth, and losing members to other clubs. Participants shared a desire for increased family engagement and more consistent volunteer involvement to strengthen club activities. They also emphasized the need to promote 4-H through strategies like hanging banners and inviting friends. Additionally, leaders highlighted the importance of keeping meetings at an appropriate and engaging length to support participation and retention.

4-H Clubs are intentionally planning meetings to last one hour or less, with a clear blend of business, learning, service, and social time. Clubs are incorporating short business sessions led by youth officers, demonstrations where members teach on another, and dedicated time for games, social interaction, and snacks. Community service projects are also used to build teamwork and strengthen social connections.

As a result of the Annual Leadership Training, **4-H members and leaders reported strong positive experiences, noting that they felt welcomed, made meaningful connections with others, and learned new skills.** Most participants shared that the training provided opportunities for growth. Additionally, the majority indicated that the session was enjoyable and engaging, reinforcing a positive environment that supports continued involvement in 4-H.

After School Programming

Medford Area Public Schools offer a Community Learning Center (CLC) for their after-school program to provide a safe place for youth to be after school and provide enriched activities. 3Doodler Start pens are a way to provide opportunities for youth to engage in **STEM activity that develops their skills and their imagination.** Medford Area Elementary School (MAES), Medford Area Middle School (MAMS), and Stetsonville Elementary School (SES) have been open to 4-H providing opportunities to teach youth how to use the 3Doodler pens. Almost all the youth enjoy the time using the 3Doodler pens. This program helps youth develop positive relationships with peers and the 4-H Educator.



Students at MAMS Using 3Doodler Pens



Extension Taylor County's Primary Partnering Organizations

- Equity Livestock Marketing Association
- Federation of Taylor County 4-H
- FFA Colby High School
- Gilman School District
- Huey's Hideaway Children's Museum
- ICAA Taylor County Food Pantry
- Medford Area Public Schools
- Medford Farmer's Market
- Northcentral WI Cattleman's Association (NCWCA)
- Rib Lake School District
- Taylor County Broadband Committee
- Taylor County Department of Health
- Taylor County Fair Board
- Taylor County Food Resource Group
- Taylor County Public Libraries
- Taylor County Solid Waste & Recycling Committee
- Taylor County Tourism
- Taylor County Unit of WI Towns Association
- WI Beef Council



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

Office Administration



PROGRAM SPECIALIST – KELLY PHILLIPS

Support

Beyond administrative duties, Phillips provides on-going support to the educators at the Taylor County Extension Office. During the months of January and February Kelly provided coordination and support for the following programs: 4-H Email Blast, 4-H Newsletter, Ag Workshop mailing/email blast, continuous AG informational emails and social media posts, Spring Strong Bodies updates and registrations, 2026 PAT Workshop, website and flyer updates. Moreover, she administered a range of services offered, statewide administrative informational zoom sessions, horticulture and agriculture inquiries and research, and general questions that may or may not be related to the services of Extension. Just in the months of January and February, Phillips has assisted over 30 Taylor County Residents via the phone, e-mail, and office drop-ins. She plays an important role connecting community members with UW resources and research.

Professional Development

As Phillips provides strong administrative support, she strives to continue building and developing the needed skills to utilize best practices and resources. She is also committed to supporting other administrative professionals and serves on a statewide committee that organizes professional development opportunities for administrative professionals around the state. Phillips recently attended co-lead a statewide Zoom focusing on Horticulture Connections in Madison for community support. Phillips also attended a Digital Accessibility via Zoom. Phillips continues to seek the latest and greatest tools to assist in her daily job responsibilities.



AREA EXTENSION DIRECTOR – AMBER REHBERG

(Taylor, Price, Lincoln, Langlade, Oneida and Florence, Forest, Vilas, Lac du Flambeau and FCP)

The start of the year has been active across both Area 3 and Area 4 as I continue providing leadership and support during this period of transition. My focus remains on maintaining strong communication with staff and county partners while ensuring programming and operations move forward smoothly. Hiring has been a major priority. I am serving on the search committee for the Area 4 Extension Director position, which will support Florence, Forest, Lac du Flambeau, Vilas, and Forest County Potawatomi. Our first-round recruitment did not result in a successful hire, and we have launched the second search. Additional hiring efforts include the Forest County Community Development Educator position, which will strengthen local planning and community engagement. Alongside staffing work, I am helping Forest County initiate a Strategic Planning Committee and process to support long-term county priorities. Also worked with Nicole, Administrative Coordinator in Taylor County, to provide a workshop for Department Heads; bringing in a fellow Extension colleague to facilitate. Mid-Year Reviews are also underway, and I am dedicating time to connect with staff, understand their needs, and support their professional growth.