Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
TAYLOR COUNTY

Taylor County
Sept/Oct 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

WeCOPE

Taylor County Extension is offering WeCOPE, an evidence-based wellness program designed to help adults better manage life stress and build resilience. Based on the positive emotions research of Dr. Judith Moskowitz, the program teaches participants practical skills proven to reduce stress and depression, increase positive emotions, and support healthier daily habits.

Delivered over six weeks in one-hour sessions, WeCOPE provides participants with opportunities to learn and practice 11 evidence-based coping and self-care skills. These strategies included gratitude, self-compassion, mindfulness, emotional awareness, acts of kindness, goal setting, and other techniques that promote emotional well-being and healthy stress management.

The program addresses a growing need for accessible mental health and wellness education in Taylor County. Participants will gain tools to better navigate personal and professional stressors while strengthening their ability to maintain positive mental health. Through weekly practice and peer support, participants will develop skills that can be applied in everyday life to improve emotional well-being, strengthen relationships, and enhance overall quality of life.

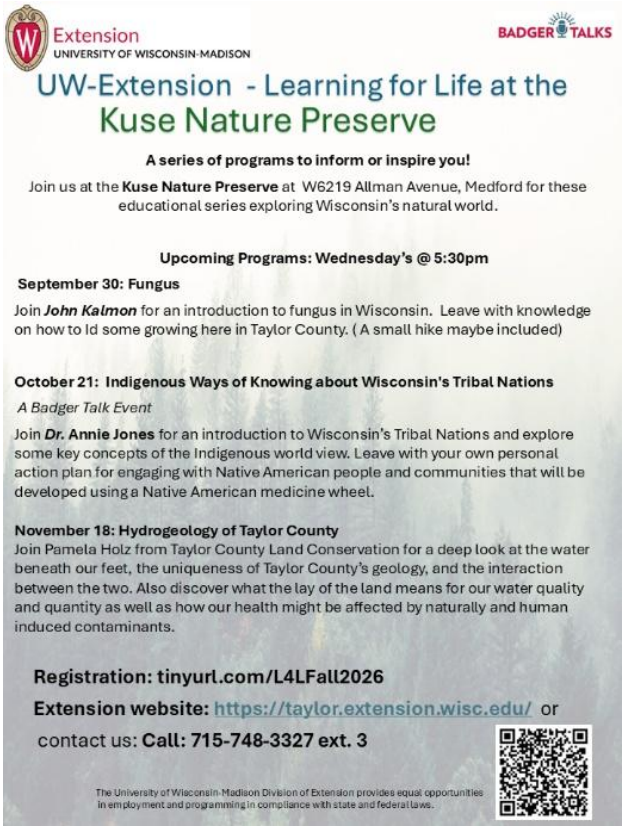


By bringing evidence-based mental health education to local residents, Taylor County Extension is helping build a more resilient, connected, and mentally healthy community.

The University of Wisconsin–Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming in compliance with state and federal law.

Learning for Life

The Learning for Life with UW-Extension series provides educational opportunities that connect Taylor County residents with subject matter experts on topics relevant to the region's natural resources, history, and community well-being. Through engaging presentations and discussions, participants gain knowledge that helps them better understand the environment, cultures, and resources that shape their communities.



This fall's programs include an introduction to local fungi led by John Kalmon, where participants will learn basic mushroom and fungi identification and gain a greater appreciation for Wisconsin's ecosystems.

A Badger Talk presentation by Dr. Annie Jones explores Wisconsin's Tribal Nations and Indigenous ways of knowing, helping participants build cultural awareness and develop practical strategies for respectful engagement with Native American communities.

The series concludes with a presentation by Pamela Holz of the Taylor County Land Conservation Department, examining the hydrogeology of Taylor County and the relationship between geology, groundwater resources, water quality, and public health.

Collectively, the goal of these programs is to increase community knowledge, encourage lifelong learning, foster appreciation for local natural and cultural resources, and support informed decision-making among residents. By bringing university specialists and local experts directly to the community, Learning for Life strengthens community connections and provides accessible educational opportunities that address topics of local importance.

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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

Successful Cow-Calf Workshop

Beef cow-calf producers in Taylor County and surrounding areas face ongoing challenges related to feed costs, herd health, and long-term profitability. To address these needs, Sandy partnered with a local farm to host a hands-on Extension Cow-Calf Workshop on Sept 23 that focused on practical strategies producers could implement on their own operations. Participants learned about pasture and hay field management, biosecurity practices to reduce disease risk, and culling and heifer management decisions that can improve cow longevity and overall herd productivity. The program was taught collaboratively by Sandy and regional livestock educators, the state beef outreach specialist, and UW-Madison forage systems' faculty.

Twenty-nine producers attended and their knowledge increased by an average of 0.5 points on a five-point scale, with the largest gains reported in culling decisions and heifer management (+1.0 point) and biosecurity (+0.8 point). While reported knowledge of pasture and hay management decreased slightly, participants entered the workshop with relatively high knowledge in that area, suggesting a stronger baseline understanding. Participants also shared examples of management changes adopted from previous UW-Extension beef programs, with 80% estimating those changes providing economic benefits of $1 to $10 per animal, demonstrating the value of Extension programming in supporting profitable and sustainable beef operations.



Those attending the cow-calf workshop learned about the host farm's animal handling facility.

Holding the Line for Producers and Veterinarians

Biosecurity reduces the chances that diseases are brought onto, spread within, or carried off a farm. Practical steps such as Premises Biosecurity Mapping, which includes mapping farm traffic patterns, identifying clear lines of separation, and managing the movement of people, vehicles, and equipment can help keep livestock healthy and limit the impact of a disease outbreak.

Because these practices are important for both everyday disease prevention and foreign animal disease preparedness, Sandy helped secure a $30,000 USDA National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program (NADPRP) Cooperative Agreement in 2025 to support *Holding the Line*, a series of livestock biosecurity premises mapping workshops across Wisconsin.

At the October Secure Sheep and Wool Workshop, Sandy helped sheep producers increase their awareness of Premises Biosecurity Mapping. In separate October programming, Sandy provided veterinarians with hands-on training in developing premise biosecurity maps and using them as tools for everyday disease prevention and outbreak response planning during three virtual (Microsoft Teams) workshops.

Together, these programs helped livestock producers and veterinarians strengthen their ability to identify biosecurity risks, create practical farm-specific plans, and be better prepared should a foreign animal disease be detected in their community or on their operation. Work continues with the grant to provide an on-demand virtual *Holding the Line* program.

Wisconsin 4-H

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

UW-MADISON EXTENSION



Julie Diepenbrock - .5 FTE

Changing 4-H Years

September closes out the past4-H year and launches the new year. Club leaders submit their Annual Authorization reports, which outline both previous year financial records and plans that youth have helped create for the new year. **Meanwhile, member enrollment is open in 4-H Online, and 4-H After School programs are already underway.** As local clubs elect their new youth officers to lead the club, we look forward to the new 4-H year by celebrating National 4-H Week in the first full week of October and throughout the month with fun Fall activities. Activities include Discovery Day at Huey's Hideaway, Harvest Days Parade, Trick or Treat for the Hungry, and Leadership Training for Club Officers and Leaders.



Liberty 4-H Club Window Display for National 4-H Week

Afterschool Programs

Twenty-three youth participated in the 4-H Ozobots in the Medford area after school programs in September. Gilman Library hosted **nineteen youth** for the 4-H after school program where youth learned more about nutrition and each made their own mini quesadilla. The October LEGO robotics program had **54 youth** learning to not just build LEGOs but code their creations to move and make sound. Gilman Library will again host a food and nutrition-based program that will focus on dairy products. Youth will have the opportunity to sample a variety of cheeses and make pudding in a bag. Julie and Michelle led eight 20-minute sections of tree identification to approximately **190 youth** at the Rib Lake School Forest Day.



Life Skills Launchpad

Julie attended the training, Life Skills Launchpad, and is planning to present eight practical, real-world lessons designed to address the core financial decisions youth will face after high school. Students will learn strategies for paying their bills, buying and owning a vehicle, choosing a financial institution, comparing housing options and exploring post-secondary education and training. **Life Skills Launchpad utilizes interactive, hands-on learning through activities, scenarios, and decision-making challenges to lay the foundation for lifelong independence, self- reliance and financial well-being.**



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

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Office Administration



PROGRAM SPECIALIST – KELLY PHILLIPS

Support

During the months of September and October, Kelly provided coordination and support for the following programs: 4-H Email Blast, 4-H Newsletter, 4-H Week displays at libraries, Health Fair Display, Ag communications via EMMA email blasts and as well as social media and web postings, continuous horticulture, community development and agriculture social media posts, Strong Bodies 2026-2027 registrations completed, and website additions/remake. 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 September and October, Phillips has assisted over 50 Taylor County Residents via 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 co-led a statewide Zoom focusing on Outlook general and informative capabilities for admin support. Phillips also identified and confirmed 5 months' worth of informational Zooms for statewide admin support to finish out 2026 and carry into second quarter of 2027. Phillips continues to seek the latest and greatest tools to assist in her daily job responsibilities.

AREA 3 EXTENSION DIRECTOR – AMBER REHBERG
(Taylor, Price, Lincoln, Langlade, and Oneida)

FY2027 Budget Prep

Over the past couple months, a significant portion of my time has been dedicated to the development and review of FY2027 county budgets across all five counties in Area 3. This work has involved collaborating with county partners to identify efficiencies, reduce expenditures where appropriate, and strategically align resources to ensure Extension can continue delivering high-quality programs that meet the needs of the communities we serve. Throughout this process, I have also continued to deepen my understanding of county budget processes, local priorities, and the unique opportunities and challenges present within each county.

County Fair Engagement

Another highlight of the quarter was attending county fairs across the area and supporting 4-H leaders, volunteers, and youth participating in 4-H food stands and fair activities. These events provide valuable opportunities to connect with community members, celebrate the accomplishments of young people, and share the many benefits of 4-H membership and Positive Youth Development programming.

End of Year Staff Reviews

Continuing to support educators across the area through regular coaching, collaboration, and end-of-year performance reviews. These discussions have provided opportunities to recognize accomplishments, identify areas for growth, and support professional development while ensuring educators remain focused on delivering meaningful educational experiences and community impact.