FALL 2026

# EXTENSION WAUKESHA COUNTY CONNECTIONS NEWSLETTER



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## STRATEGIC PLANNING SERVICES OFFERED: FROM IDEAS TO IMPACT

Extension Waukesha County provides affordable, research-based strategic planning services designed to move organizations from discussion to action. As a trusted and neutral facilitator, Extension helps groups engage internal and external participation, leverage community data, build consensus, and develop practical strategies that lead to measurable results.

Successful organizations don't leave their future to chance. A strategic planning process helps them to clarify priorities, align key players, focus resources, and build momentum around a shared vision. Contact Steve at steven.chmielewski@wisc.edu or 262-548-7781 to discuss practical ways for your organization to prepare for a successful strategic planning process and build a roadmap for lasting impact in 2027.

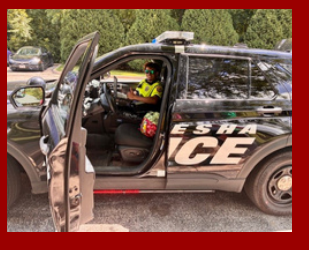
## LOVE BUGS PROVIDE COMFORT TO YOUTH DURING EMERGENCY



During the 2025-2026 4-H year, 4-H youth, leaders, and volunteers collaborated with community members on a countywide community service project to sew and stuff Love Bugs (a lady bug shaped plush toy). More than 200 completed Love Bugs were distributed to police and fire crews in Waukesha County to provide children comfort in the midst of an emergency or challenging situation.



During the summer, we received the following report from a City of Waukesha firefighter: "*Yesterday we had a bus accident with 13 terrified kiddos that had minor injuries but needed more hugs than just our crew were able to provide. I was able to give the (Love) Bug a big hug and the kids passed the "hugs" around as each kid needed. They were between 8-10 years old and didn't have their parents there so the (Love) Bug was a perfect stand in while we provided patient care.*"



Due to the outstanding success of the Love Bug project, it has been extended. If you'd like to get involved, contact Sara at 262-548-7774 or stomjanovich@wisc.edu.

## GREEN INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS EARN ARBORIST CONTINUING EDUCATION UNITS

Extension Waukesha County offers affordable, research-based educational programs to help green industry professionals stay current on the newest industry practices and technology available, with arborist continuing education units (CEUs) available for most sessions.

If you work in the industry and would like to be notified of upcoming programs, such as our Landscape & Grounds Maintenance Short Course, which is held live online on Wednesday afternoons February, email Lisa at lboyer@waukeshacounty.gov.

UW-Madison Division of Extension works with residents, businesses, local government and community-based organizations in Waukesha County and beyond to identify and address immediate and long-term educational needs.

## GROWING TOMORROW'S LEADERS: 4-H PROGRAM EXPANDS TO BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Waukesha County 4-H Emerging Leaders program has successfully expanded to Butler Middle School, bringing year-round youth leadership opportunities to students. More than 35 participants are currently involved in biweekly sessions focused on leadership development, life skills, college and career readiness, and hands-on STEM experiences.

Throughout the year, students will build confidence, strengthen decision-making and communication skills, and take on leadership roles that help them make a positive impact in their school and community.

For more information on Waukesha County 4-H or to learn more about starting a 4-H Program at your school or community organization, contact James Boling, Extension 4-H Positive Youth Development Educator at james.boling@wisc.edu.

## *EATING SMART & BEING ACTIVE* BENEFITS FAMILIES AT LOCAL CLINIC

EATING SMART
BEING ACTIVE

FoodWIse works with agencies who serve adults with limited resources. This year, educators taught three *Eating Smart & Being Active* (ESBA) series for parents/ caregivers at Waukesha Free Clinic. The ESBA series highlights ways to stay healthy on a budget, featuring healthy recipes that fit into a limited food budget and simple physical activities they can do at home. Participants often report positive changes they are making at home.

One participant reported that before taking ESBA lessons she was used to eating vegetables plain and steamed, and they weren't something she particularly enjoyed. Through the lessons, she was introduced to new recipes and preparation methods she had never tried before, including veggie quesadillas, quinoa salad, carrot & orange salad, tomato cucumber salad, and chickpea salad with pita chips. She enjoyed the recipes so much that she started recreating them at home and even adding her own twists. She shared that she now looks forward to grocery shopping, trying new vegetables, and finding ways to add them to her meals.

To learn more about bringing this nutrition education program to your organization, reach out to Jill Herz, FoodWIse Administrator, at jill.herz@wisc.edu.

## 4-H SUMMER CAMP RECAP

Waukesha County 4-H held its annual Summer Camp in August with over 125 campers led by a fantastic group of 22 youth counselors, 22 adult volunteers, and both 4-H educators!

It was a successful event which highlighted the Essential Elements of 4-H Youth Development: Belonging, Independence, Generosity, and Mastery.

**A special thank you to the generous sponsors of Extension Waukesha County 4-H Summer Camp: Eaton, Novonesis, and Rinderle Door.**

EATON novonesis RINDERLE DOOR CO.

## FOOD PRESERVATION AND HOME SAFETY "ASK AN EXPERT" RESOURCE AVAILABLE

Wisconsin residents can call the AnswerLine for trusted, research-based help with food safety and household questions. Staffed by trained Extension professionals, the service offers reliable guidance you can count on with:

- Safe food canning, freezing, and drying
- Preserving jams, jellies, salsa, and more
- Caring for kitchen equipment
- Seasonal safety tips

**CALL**: 1-866-540-4636, Monday-Friday, 9 am-Noon & 1-4 pm (closed holidays)

**LEARN MORE**: go.wisc.edu/AnswerLine

*This resource is made possible through a partnership with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.*

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