

# Extension Snapshot

<https://columbia.extension.wisc.edu>

*Columbia County Extension is following the guidance of the CDC, WI DHS, the Governor, & the UW-Madison Campus. Our priority is the health of ourselves, our coworkers, our neighbors, and everyone in our communities. We are telecommuting and limiting events to virtual or no-contact in our efforts to protect those around us.*

## New 2021 Extension Community Development Initiative:

### What will increase affordable housing in the Portage Area?

In 2020 the Columbia Co. Economic Development COVID-19 Recovery, Response and Resiliency Team hosted fifteen educational zoom programs for area chamber & ED directors so they may better respond & support community employers and small business. During this time, the Team discovered there is a shortage of affordable housing options throughout the County. Starting in 2021, professional key stakeholders (e.g., chamber, City, employers, K-12, non-profits, etc.) will explore and increase understanding around why there is a shortage and identify potential leverage points that will lead to more affordable housing options in the Portage Area. For more information contact: Kathleen Haas, [Kathleen.haas@wisc.edu](mailto:Kathleen.haas@wisc.edu)

### Contributing factors to why affordable housing is a hot topic in WI:

- ◆ Housing values are accelerating at a concerning rate.
- ◆ Construction of new housing unusually low which is contributing to accelerating values.
- ◆ What is an “acceptable” level of housing fiscal stress for your community?
- ◆ Rental market is experiencing high levels of fiscal stress.

Source: Feb. 2021 Inter-county Coordinating Committee (ICC) presentation made by Prof. Steve Deller, UW-Madison Community Development Economist, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics; [scdeller@wisc.edu](mailto:scdeller@wisc.edu)

### WI Rural Housing Recommendations

from the 2020 WI Rural Voices for Prosperity: A Report of the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Commission:

- ◆ Provide assistance to address rural affordable housing needs
- ◆ Explore new energy efficiency and alternative energy options for low-income families.
- ◆ Revise the scoring on state’s competitive housing finance program to get more financial resources to rural WI.
- ◆ Consider creating centers of expertise focused on housing development at a regional rural level.
- ◆ Support all forms of rural workforce housing development.

Source @ [https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Web\\_Governors-Blue-Ribbon-Commission-Report.pdf](https://wedc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Web_Governors-Blue-Ribbon-Commission-Report.pdf)

**DID YOU KNOW..... WORKING AT MINIMUM WAGE, \$7.25/HR, EACH WEEK YOU HAVE TO WORK 77 HOURS TO AFFORD A BEDROOM RENTAL AT FAIR MARKET RENT.**

## New Columbia County 4-H Volunteers Review Experiential Learning Model

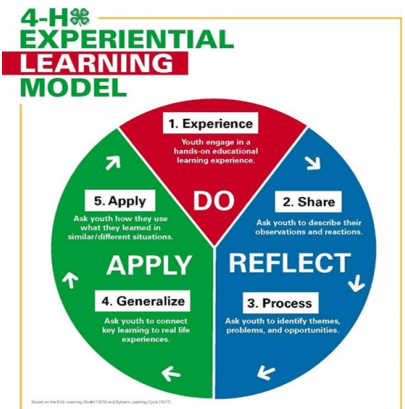
In late March, new 4-H adult volunteer leaders from Columbia, Dodge and Sauk counties participated together in a three-county virtual training titled, “Volunteers in Preparation.” This required training prepares volunteers for their roles in the 4-H program and a number of 4-H Youth Development tools are shared during the 2 ½ hour session.

In 4-H Youth Development, youth are empowered to learn through hands-on experiences – doing. Experiential learning takes place when youth are involved in a project / activity, and they do the following: they look back at their experience critically; they determine what was useful or impactful, or important to remember; and they use this information in real-life situations. Youth complete three simple steps: DO – REFLECT – APPLY. (See model).

**Step 1: Do** – something. **Experience** – something. **Participate** – in something. This is the hands-on activity / experience. Volunteers are encouraged to be sure “the DO” is at an appropriate age level and all risk management issues have been considered.

**Step 2: Reflect. Share and process** results, reactions and observations. This is when volunteers turn into facilitators. Facilitators do NOT need to have the answers. Key to this step is asking questions which help the young person reflect. For example: What did you do, see, feel, like, learn? Would you do anything differently? This step is often accomplished by youth at the county fair when they meet with an expert (a judge) and discuss the project they have completed and evaluate it.

**Step 3: Apply.** How can what you just experienced and learned be used again? What was learned for a similar or different situation in the future? This is the NOW WHAT stage – what’s next? This is the ultimate reason for doing the activity. Youth should be able to show what they have gained – new knowledge, the ability to practice new life skills. The focus is not solely on the subject matter, the project, or the product skills. Time must be left at the end of an activity for talking about the reason for doing the activity. Never underestimate the importance of processing because the processing time allows for three opportunities -- it fosters ongoing communication and discussion; it focuses on what has been learned; and it sets the tone for applying learnings in the future.





“Let’s Get Green and Growing” an on-line gardening event for Master Gardener Volunteers and other garden enthusiasts to learn about “Creating Gardens of Four Season Interest”, “Addressing Invasive Species with Citizen Science”, “Minor Fruits – Major Impact”, and “Daylilies – The Perfect

Perennial”. This effort was designed to provide Continuing Education opportunities for Master Gardener Volunteers and to assist homeowners in improving their gardening techniques as well as protecting the environment from invasive species. 299 people registered. 260 people participated. 160 people were in the Zoom conference simultaneously.

Portage Community Garden is full for 2021-All 24 garden plots at the garden on Silver Lake Drive have been spoken for and we have a waiting list of three more gardeners. Working with the City of Portage Water Utility and Portage Youth Inc., to install a clean water meter so the garden does not pay for sewerage costs for water applied to the garden.

Columbia County Corn Growers are planning an in-person meeting at the Ron Minick Farm shop for June 16. Update Reports from NRCS, FSA, Land & Water Conservation, and Columbia County Extension will kick off the event. They will be followed with a grain marketing presentation, and topped off by a grain bin safety discussion and demonstration by the National Grain and Feed Association.

Work is coming along nicely to assist the Lake Wisconsin Farmer Watershed Council with organizational development. They will be adopting a Charter to outline their operational rules. They are also working to host an event on June 19, in cooperation with SSWG (Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group) and the Lake Redstone Farmer Led Watershed Group. The event will highlight Rick Clark, a nationally recognized cover crop enthusiast, low disturbance liquid manure injection demo, no-till cover crop seeding demo, mob grazing demo, rainfall simulator demo, and a soil pit.



**UW-MADISON EXTENSION**

This month FoodWise started working on the next three-year plan of work for Area 16 (Columbia, Dodge, Sauk Counties). The program is hoping to be able to meet with partners both in-person and virtually next year. More time is going to be built into the plan to build meaningful relationships with our partners and over the summer, the team is going to take a deep dive look at where we are currently programming, what audiences we are serving and how we can strengthen our programmatic efforts over the next three years. Along with the plan of work, the team is still teaching virtually both with Bitmoji classrooms that teachers are having their students do independently as well as joining classrooms in a live virtual format. Live lessons are currently being done in 3rd grades at Spring Hill Elementary in Wisconsin Dells. First grade lessons will start in April and fifth grade lessons just recently ended. Lessons are also being done live virtually with the Portage Head Start classrooms and parents. We are looking forward to the warm weather and the potential to meet again in-person!



MEET OUR EDUCATORS  
**Kimberly Lafler**  
FoodWise Educator



MEET OUR EDUCATORS  
**Caitlin Richardson**  
FoodWise Coordinator



**COLUMBIA COUNTY EXTENSION**

112 E. Edgewater Street  
Room 212  
Portage, WI 53901  
608.742.9680

[Columbia.extension.wisc.edu](http://Columbia.extension.wisc.edu)

*Jeff Hoffmann, Area Extension Director (Columbia, Dodge & Sauk)*  
*George Koepp, Agriculture Extension Educator*  
*Kathleen Haas, Community Development Extension Educator*  
*Caitlin Richardson, FoodWise Program Coordinator*  
*Kimberly Lafler, FoodWise Educator*  
*Pat Wagner, Positive Youth Development Educator*  
*Vacant, Human Development & Relationships Educator*  
*Sarah Millard, Administrative Assistant*  
*Lori Swanson, Administrative Assistant*