



NEWS FROM EXTENSION

UW-MADISON DIVISION OF EXTENSION MANITOWOC COUNTY



October 2025

More Than a Ribbon: How Manitowoc 4-H Prepares Members for Success

By: Katrina Pionek

4-H Educator



The journey to the fair ribbon can be nerve-wracking. That's why Manitowoc 4-H offered a Fair Practice in August that was designed to be a safe, supportive space where young members can shake off their fears and get comfortable with the judging process. This was their chance to practice their presentation, fine-tune their project, and get valuable feedback from experienced mentors in a no-pressure environment. It's not just about what they've created, it's about the confidence they build.

Recently, Manitowoc 4-H members and their families got a sneak peak at the judging process during a special fair practice. The evening was all about taking the mystery out of show day. Led by the Cloverbud Fair Superintendent and the 4-H Educator, families learned the entire journey from parking and check-in to what to expect during judging. They got to see the actual setup and meet some of the friendly volunteers who will be there to guide them. It was a way to replace pre-fair jitters for both the youth and the parents with a clear plan and a boost of confidence.

The most exciting part of the evening was the hands-on practice. We had youth and adult volunteers step in as mock judges, giving young members a chance to run through the process. Exhibitors could practice with one judge or all six-it was up to them to decide how many times they wanted to prepare.

This event was a powerful leadership opportunity for our older members, who volunteered as judges and remembered their own nervous excitement as young exhibitors. It also helped bridge the gap between age groups, allowing younger members to meet and connect with older 4-H leaders in the community.

The positive feedback after the fair was overwhelming. Parents told us how much the practice helped their children feel confident on judging day, with little fear about speaking to the judges. A Cloverbud judge was particularly impressed, praising how well the kids maintained eye contact and spoke clearly about their projects. This practice session truly made a significant impact.

National Farm Safety & Health Week 2025:

"Safety First, Avoid the Worst"

By: Angie Ulness

Agricultural Educator

September 21-27, 2025; practices to use all year round!

National Farm Safety and Health Week is a time to focus on reducing risks in agriculture--one of the most dangerous industries in the U.S. This year's theme, "Safety First, Avoid the Worst," encourages proactive steps to prevent injury and death on farms.

Key safety reminders:

- Use rollover protection and seatbelts on tractors and equipment.
- Check lights, signals, and slow-moving vehicle signs on road-driven machinery.
- Conduct daily walk-arounds to identify fire hazards, slippery surfaces, or missing safety guards.
- Train all equipment operators using manuals, especially young or new workers.
- Keep children safe by creating supervised play areas away from work zones.

In Wisconsin alone, 25-40 people die in farm-related incidents each year -- most of which are preventable.

Explore safety tips and free resources from UW-Madison Extension:

<https://farms.extension.wisc.edu/topics/safety-health/>

Farm-vehicle related
incidents in WI (2024):

153 Crashes

65 Injuries

1 Fatality



The Big Apple Project: A Big Success for low-income Families

Submitted by: Laura Apfelbeck

FoodWise Nutrition Coordinator



The Big Apple Project funded by the West Foundation, Inc., supports a food recovery initiative transporting low-cost fresh apples from the Door County Peninsular Research Station to food pantries and nonprofit organizations across Door, Kewaunee, and Manitowoc Counties. FoodWise sought grant funding to purchase equipment necessary for harvest, and two Manitowoc-based organizations, Grow It Forward and Sullivan Family Farm, agreed to transport the apples, dropping off at various participating sites.

For the Research Station, this project helps distribute food grade apples to people who want to eat them. Prior to this project, the station manager Becky Wiepz said that many apples were simply sold for deer bait because the station had no capacity to market or distribute them. Because the Big Apple Project sought to provide apples to food pantries, Wiepz sold the apples for the same price as she was paid for the deer apples.

Initially, FoodWise coordinator Laura Apfelbeck hoped that 5 food pantries would be involved. In the first week of distribution, we hit that goal. Pantry managers purchased 20 bushels of apples or roughly 800 lbs and Grow it Forward staff distributed the fruit to 5 pantries: Kewaunee County Food Pantry in Algoma, Lakeshore Community Pantry in Kewaunee, First Presbyterian Community Meals Program in Manitowoc, Peters Pantry of Manitowoc and Grow it Forward of Manitowoc.

Since the refrigerated trucks have capacity to transport two macro bins (40 bushels, 1600 lbs), Apfelbeck contacted other nonprofits in the communities to find out if they might be interested in apples, even those

pantry managers who said no the first time we asked. As a result, our distribution list for Week 2 includes all the same pantries as Week 1 plus Manitowoc-Two Rivers YMCA early childhood center, Manitowoc Boys & Girls Club, the Two Rivers School District, and the Manitowoc Public School District. Grow it Forward covered the cost of the apples for the school district using other grant funding. The project has been so popular that we ran out of apple bags for our distributions. Fortunately Festival Foods of Manitowoc stepped in with a donation of 400 apple bags to tide us through until the end of October.

All of these schools and nonprofit organizations serve low-income families. In mid-October, Door County pantries will participate as well—two main pantries in Sturgeon Bay will serve as drop sites so that 7 small area food pantries can pick up their bushel of apples from a central location. These small pantries do not have budgets to accommodate fresh produce purchases or staff able to pick apples or carry large bushels and bags, so the central drop site works well for them. The Door County Food Pantry Coalition voted to cover the cost of the apples.

The Big Apple Project continues through the end of October. Already partners have plans to use the procedures created for the Big Apple Project to secure other unsold fresh produce from local farmers and transport it to food pantries, increasing access for low-income families in need.

FoodWise continues in Manitowoc County for a year

Across most of Wisconsin and indeed across the United States, nutrition education funded through SNAP-Ed ended September 30 of 2025. Despite extensive advocacy efforts by Extension, UW-Madison's University Relations, and partners such as the Wisconsin Counties Association, the congressional budget reconciliation bill signed into law on July 4 eliminated all SNAP-Ed funding. For over 30 years UW-Madison Division of Extension provided local nutrition education throughout our state that has been funded by the federal SNAP-Ed grant program. FoodWise, was one of the programs supported by the federal funds.



Fortunately, nutrition education will continue in Manitowoc County. As a result of the generosity of The West Foundation, Laura Apfelbeck and Jace Purdy will provide nutrition education to low-income people in Manitowoc County through September 30, 2026. More than 7500 county residents use SNAP benefits to purchase food for themselves and their families, and 44% of our school children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, the primary measure of poverty we have for children in our county. FoodWise offers information about healthy food options such as understanding MyPlate and nutrition facts labels, and pairs that with culinary skill building, budgeting, and family-friendly recipes.

There is Always Hope

By: Cath Tease

Health & Well-Being Educator

When addiction affects a family, everyone feels the impact, but families also have incredible potential to support recovery.

The National Council on Mental Wellbeing, in partnership with Facing Fentanyl, has published a new **Recovery-Ready Families** framework. The guide recognizes that families aren't just impacted by substance use disorder (SUD), they are essential to prevention, treatment and healing.

This resource offers compassionate, adaptable principles to help families minimize harm, increase connection, and provide stability.

By drawing on ideas from the Recovery Friendly Workplaces, and Community frameworks, it supports families in creating environments that foster resilience and hope.

Learn more at [Resources Archive - National Council for Mental Wellbeing](#) or contact local Extension Health and Wellbeing educator, Cath Tease at cath.tease@wisc.edu.



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