



Extension Connection

Monthly Highlights – July 2016

Well water testing should be done annually by residents with a private well.

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What is the Impact of 4-H? Hear from Our County's Youth

Many 4-H members were awarded college scholarships this month. Awards were provided by the market livestock, small animal, and horse projects, and the Adult and Teen 4-H Leader Associations. In member applications youth wrote about what they have gained from their 4-H experience. Listen to their voices...

- My 4-H youth leadership project has been very beneficial for me. In particular, it has helped me with my communication skills. I feel very comfortable talking with nearly everyone in virtually any setting, and youth leadership helped me a lot with that. I learned how to effectively communicate ideas and instructions. - *Zach* -
- Being an active leader in 4-H has inspired me to reach new heights which I previously thought unattainable. My most important role would be acting as a youth director for 4-H camp. Through this experience, I gained valuable leadership skills and was a role model for the campers and other counselors. - *Jake* -
- Through the 4-H market goat project, I learned so much about raising goats, as well as learning from the experience of teaching. I learned how to be open to others' opinions. I have learned how to persevere, have patience, responsibility, and how to have fun. I learned that if you don't keep trying you'll never know how it could have turned out. - *Bethany* -
- On the Wisconsin 4-H Leaders Council I have been responsible for organizing a variety of state events, which has taught me how to properly delegate responsibilities, the importance of following through on tasks, and the reward received after organizing a successful event that hundreds of Wisconsin 4-H members are able to take part in. - *Allison* -
- I lead project meetings for younger members. That involves coming up with project ideas for the kids and taking charge of what goes on. These leadership activities have helped me have more confidence. I am more responsible and my creative mind has been working much more. - *Carissa* -

Area Residents Participate in Survey of Well Water Users

With input from more than 900 county well water users in a recent survey, the University of Wisconsin-Extension, Fond du Lac County learned that residents want more information about the safety of their well water. Women are less certain about the safety of their well water than men. Young people – under age 55 – are less likely to have thought about testing their water at all, and don't know how.

The study asked residents who have sampled with UW-Extension in the past, residents in the Town of Byron, and a random selection of rural county residents to share their opinions about the safety of their well water, reasons for testing or not testing, and most trusted advisors on well water safety.

Well water testing should be done annually by residents with a private well. Fond du Lac County Health Department offers testing for nitrates and bacteria locally. The State Lab of Hygiene and the Water & Environmental Analysis Lab (affiliated with UW-Extension) will even mail bottles to you, for testing of additional contaminants such as iron and arsenic. Details on testing options can be found by searching “UW-Extension well water” online or contacting the local UW-Extension office at <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu> or 920/929-3170.

Unfortunately, many types of water contamination are not visible. For example, nitrate, commonly found in this area, has no taste, smell, or color but is a health concern for infants less than 6 months of age or women who are pregnant, at levels above 10 mg/L.

Another misconception the survey revealed is that well water results can be assumed from a neighbor’s test. Well water safety is site-specific. A family’s well may be drilled and cased to a different depth than their neighbors’ wells; therefore, it is fundamental for each well to be tested.

The study results are guiding well water education to rural landowners. The full text report and infographics summarizing the findings can be found at <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu>.

The study was funded by a 2015-2016 grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board, the Center for Watershed Science and Education, and the Towns of Empire, Byron, Fond du Lac, Oakfield, and Ripon.

The Fond du Lac County Health Department, Code Enforcement, Land Conservation, and UW-Extension departments have worked together for many years to educate county residents about well water safety and best practices for maintaining safe drinking water. They offer township-wide testing programs, fund well abandonment projects, monitor septic systems, operate the drinking water testing lab, respond to residents’ questions, and do site visits as needed to monitor and sample after contamination events.

If you have further questions about the survey research and sampling options, contact Diana Hammer Tscheschlok at 920/929-3170 or visit <http://fonddulac.uwex.edu>.

Building Financial Security

Financial security is an essential goal for today’s families. It begins when people can manage their cash and credit to make ends meet day to day. Studies show many Wisconsin families face ongoing financial insecurity, reflecting regional and national trends. Fond du Lac County UW-Extension Family Living Educator Michelle Tidemann provides educational programs designed to increase financial security. On April 23, sixty-five individuals attended the Women’s Finance Conference held during Money Smart Week. Twenty-eight of the sixty-five conference attendees completed an end of the session financial survey. The same financial survey was e-mailed to forty-two conference participants as a follow up. Twenty-five follow up financial surveys were returned. From the follow up financial survey, individuals reported more had set aside emergency/rainy day funds that would help cover expenses for 3 months in case of sickness/job loss/emergency than had reported in April. This was an increase of 4 individuals.

When asked what financial management skill they started as a result of attending the conference, the following was shared:

- “I pay myself first rather than last.”
- “Using auto transfer to savings and use the budget tracker.”
- “Less spending.”
- “Better skills in watching my investments and living within my means.”
- “Changed my TV service provider.”
- “To be aware that thinking on buying and reusing things already bought in a different way than before.”
- “I track my expenses and live as prudently as possible.”
- “I just found out from the banker my credit report was considered in the ‘Excellent’ range.”

UW-Extension Family Living is well positioned to help families become more financially capable, building (or rebuilding) financial security through education, counseling and coaching. With established networks in communities throughout the state, family living educators are a trusted source for unbiased financial information.

When Wisconsin families strengthen their financial security, communities benefit, too, as families contribute to a foundation for economic growth.

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