Cooperative Extension: Your connection to university faculty, research and resources

You’ll find Extension educators out in the community, holding seminars on land use, teaching families about healthy eating and conducting parenting classes for young fathers.

To find out how Cooperative Extension serves your community, take an inside look at our programs.
What is Cooperative Extension?
Cooperative Extension is one of four divisions in the University of Wisconsin-Extension. Through a partnership with county government, Cooperative Extension faculty and staff bring university resources to the people of Wisconsin.

How is Cooperative Extension structured?
Cooperative Extension has offices in all 72 Wisconsin counties with educators who specialize in one or more program areas. Educators also excel in leadership development, consensus building and organizational development. University specialists at UW-System campuses serve as a resource for county educators, completing Extension’s network.

How does Cooperative Extension work?
Cooperative Extension educators don’t lecture or give grades in a typical classroom. Instead, we deliver education where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and community centers.

Extension educators also speak to civic groups and county boards, write newspaper columns, do radio and TV programs, facilitate meetings and build coalitions to solve community problems.

To reach a wider audience – and make it easy for those in remote areas to “attend” programs – Extension uses satellite technology, teleconferencing and interactive video to link people around the region. Working with Wisconsin Public TV, Extension is currently pioneering the use of web-TV.

What programs does Extension offer?
Cooperative Extension focuses on four areas:

• 4-H youth development,
• agriculture and natural resources,
• community, natural resource & economic development, and
• family living.
4-H youth development
Cooperative Extension’s youth programs help young people grow into productive, confident adults. More than 25,000 volunteer leaders help Extension build youth-focused community networks. Extension youth programs offer:
• experiences that allow kids to explore careers and develop workplace skills;
• activities that teach nutrition, gardening and environmental awareness; and
• community-service projects that build planning and leadership skills.

Agriculture and natural resources
Agriculture educators support farmers by sharing the latest university research in production management and marketing through on-farm visits, seminars, field days and demonstrations. Agriculture educators:
• teach farm business management, sustainable farming and farm safety;
• conduct year-round horticulture programs for the green industry;
• train master gardeners and diagnose plant insect and disease problems.

Community development programs
Our community, natural resources and economic development programs help Wisconsin residents build strong communities, attract and keep good jobs, and balance growth and environmental quality. Acting as facilitators, planners and researchers, Extension educators:
• help communities develop plans to improve local economies and channel growth;
• research transportation, housing and child-care issues to guide community development;
• teach approaches for improving business profitability; and
• orient local officials in intergovernmental operations.
Family living

Family living educators conduct a wide range of programs designed to support Wisconsin families and communities. For example, they:

- help children, parents and individuals make healthy choices about diet and exercise;
- teach families and older adults how to manage money and other resources; and
- hold workshops on child development and prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Who sets Extension’s agenda?

To make sure educational programs meet local needs, Cooperative Extension taps input from residents and community leaders every four years in a statewide planning process. We work hard to gather views from residents of all backgrounds and walks of life, representing diverse age, income and ethnic backgrounds.

The local needs and strengths that surface from these meetings form a blueprint that guides Extension programming. Parenting education, youth violence, strengthening the state’s dairy industry, cultural sensitivity and balancing growth with green space are among the issues that emerged from the most recent planning process.

Who does Cooperative Extension work with?

Cooperative Extension’s partners include other county and state agencies, tribal nations, business, community groups, legislators, neighborhood residents, local universities and colleges. Today, working partnerships are at the heart of our successful programs.

Who funds Cooperative Extension?

Program dollars come from four sources: state government at about 40 percent, county government at about 28 percent and federal funds at about 23 percent. Revenue, generated through fees for programs, accounts for about 9 percent.