

Milwaukee County Cooperative Extension County Impact Report



Our mission:

to facilitate people's use of university knowledge to make informed decisions that enrich their lives and enhance their communities

Nutrition Education:

Eight Nutrition Educators work throughout the year to help County residents make healthier choices. The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) is a federally-funded and free nutrition education program targeting lower income individuals and families. WNEP is the largest nutrition education program serving diverse populations in Milwaukee County. Our program reached over 5,300 children, youth, adults and seniors in 2010. Most nutrition classes are offered in schools, senior centers and community agencies.

Our nutrition educators focus on: Promoting healthful diets, physical activity, proper food handling practices to avoid food-borne illness, and becoming more food secure by planning how to spend food dollars, planning meals, and using thrifty food shopping practices.



Building Capacity for Home Visitors working with At Risk Families

Throughout the year, our Family Living Program offers a variety of trainings to organizations working with at-risk families with young children. The Program provided the Home Visitation Foundations course and training on a developmental screening tool for children birth through 5 years; the Ages and Stages Questionnaire. In addition to these core programs, training on Management of High Risk Health Issues During Pregnancy was provided to 70 community nurses and social service professionals. Participants reported learning a lot from the up-to-date research presented and identified many ways in which the information will be used in their practice, such as implementing increased screening for depression and interpersonal violence and additional ways to look for health issues and risks in order to more effectively to support clients.

Supporting Poverty Eradication

As the result of small group dialog sessions, facilitated by a Family Living Educator, which assessed poverty conditions in Milwaukee, a small action team was formed to develop an issue brief on the role of higher education related to an individual's higher earning potential and a community's successful economic development. This research included information on a free college tuition model developed in Kalamazoo, MI, called the Kalamazoo Promise. The Family Living Educator provided research, team meetings coordination and communication updates. After the team's one-year commitment was done, the team decided to continue its work to bring a Promise program to the City of Milwaukee.

In collaboration with the Family Living Educator, the Community Development educator assisted the group in organizational planning, which led to the formation of Milwaukee Promise, Inc., a non-profit organization whose mission is to "fund post-secondary education for graduates of Milwaukee Public Schools". The Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel wrote an article about the program and supported it in an editorial. New stakeholders are showing interest in the program and funders have invited the organization to send a letter of intent to support the hiring of an operations manager. Interested stakeholders can visit The Milwaukee Promise blog at <http://mkepromise.wetpaint.com/>.



Youth Development

The African Diaspora Program is a cultural and gender based 16-week youth program currently in two area high schools and one community organization. African American male high school students read African literature and select text books in order to foster global education and awareness of the uniqueness of Africa culture and heritage. African Union models and other models teach students leadership skills, cooperation, unity, responsibility and self determination as a bridge to cultural awareness. Through this effort, critical thinking skills and cultural competence is emphasized. The program culminates in a 2-day UN Model week at UWM.



4-H: Engineering & Pre-College Support

Thanks to the Department of Continuing Education- University of Wisconsin-Waukesha, the Child Development Center of St. Joseph's and two Milwaukee Public elementary schools, 25 middle school students on Milwaukee's South side are undertaking and completing a pre-college and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Certificate Program. By completing this program, the students will obtain 1-2 Continuing Education Units from the University of Wisconsin Waukesha. Students are immersed in STEM concepts and principles through interactive hands-on learning sessions using a proven 4-H STEM curriculum that educates youth to become more science ready. A graduation ceremony will be held in late May.

Community & Economic Development

In the first full year of our Community, Natural Resources & Economic Development (CNRED) program, the CNRED Educator undertook a comprehensive Milwaukee County-wide Needs Assessment to help guide what countywide education and program work the CNRED program could conduct over the next several years. An electronic survey of 150 municipal leaders and community stakeholders was used to determine needs in the county. The survey was administered jointly with UW River Falls. The survey effort was followed up with nine focus sessions involving representatives from 16 of the 19 municipalities and 20 community stakeholders. A report on the findings is in its final stage of development. In addition the Educator assisted 14 organized groups and entities with community and organizational development initiatives and activities ranging from job creation, fresh food access, strategic planning, and incorporation.

Water Quality Education

The UW-Extension Basin Education Initiative with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources designs and delivers educational programs, assists organizations, and builds partnerships to promote understanding and stewardship of Wisconsin's natural resources at the watershed and landscape scale.

Two regional Basin Educators collaborate with the educational efforts of governmental agencies and/or citizen organizations. Basin Educators provide expertise in:

- Natural resources issues
- Group process and facilitation
- Organizational capacity building
- Adult education principles
- Educational program design/implementation
- Volunteer trainings

Urban Agriculture

The Urban Agriculture Program manages the largest and oldest community gardening program in Milwaukee County—968 plots on 45 tillable acres. The Garden Rental Program served 500 families last year and is the largest, continuous garden rental program in the State; It has the largest working farm in Milwaukee County, a composite of 49 micro-farms and community gardens on Milwaukee's Northwest side of town. We have the only university-linked Apiculture (beekeeping) program in Southeastern WI.

Horticulture:

The Horticulture Program creates a significant community multiplier effect through the largest trained volunteer force in educational gardening and environmental stewardship projects – the UW-Extension Master Gardener Volunteers; Through them, it partners with over 50 community organizations for public garden projects and educational presentations; Volunteers help UW-Extension staff to offer the County's only one-on-one horticulture 'ready reference' service, through the Horticulture Helpline and the UW-Extension Horticulture Center at Boerner Botanical Gardens; It provides reliable, unbiased research-based information to area gardeners through the FOX6-TV, the Journal Sentinel and Wisconsin Public Radio; Topics cover environmentally friendly pest management, invasive plant and insect species like garlic mustard and emerald ash borer, and health and well-being through adaptive gardening and growing nutritious vegetables and herbs.

Natural Areas

In collaboration with Milwaukee County Parks, The Natural Areas Program provides educational programming and natural areas management of 10,000 acres of Milwaukee County parkland. The program mission statement is, "Blending Milwaukee County's diverse and unique natural areas with its culturally rich communities to preserve and nurture its natural heritage for current and future generations." The program has 54 partner organizations (educational institutions, community groups, government agencies, and not-for-profits), 2,500 natural areas volunteers, two County-funded staff positions and 6 unpaid intern positions, and annually improves the ecological functions of over 1000 acres of County-owned natural areas.

Nature In the Parks/Wehr Nature Center

In collaboration with Milwaukee County Parks and located in Whitnall Park, Nature in the Parks (NIP) is a highly regarded environmental education center in Milwaukee County. The educational programming particularly targets pre-school and elementary-age populations. Both the Center and the NIP programs have received awards and other recognition for the quality of their work. The physical infrastructure (of building and land) has undergone improvements despite the financial difficulties facing Milwaukee County Parks Department, due to staff efforts in attracting grants and donations for the upgrades.

The Center has forged a variety of partnerships over the years: From teaching environmental courses at post secondary institutions, to joint programming with central city public schools to serving on statewide science education committees.

