

# Extension Impact: Education Makes a Difference

## Thank you, Connie Abert

Following an extended medical leave of absence, Connie Abert has retired from her position as the Waupaca County UW-Extension Youth Development Educator. This was a position she held for 20 years with Waupaca County youth both in 4-H and in the broader community. In addition to Connie's support of and work with 4-H, she was an early innovator of a variety of community youth initiatives and really paved the way to help others find success in similar situations. Connie was never hesitant to try any new program or outreach method. She introduced many research based programs to schools and groups in Waupaca County.



**Jessica Beckendorf**  
Community Development

**Greg Blonde**  
Agriculture

**Christi Gabrilka**  
FoodWise Coordinator

**Kelly Hammond**  
FoodWise Educator

**Sandy Liang**  
Family Living

**Penny Tank**  
4-H Youth Development

## Inside This Issue

***Farm to School in Waupaca County Enters Year 10 with New Educator*** 2

***Waupaca County Suicide Prevention Coalition Invites Former Green Bay Packer to Speak About Mental Health*** 2

***Field Day Highlights New Manure Application Equipment*** 3

***Waupaca County Broadband Survey Closes; Over 600 Responses Received*** 3

***Introducing Our New Area Extension Director*** 4

- ◆ Secured grant funding for an Environmental Youth Connections Project that helped recognize 30 school forests among all 7 school districts in Waupaca County along with training for teachers in Project WET, Project WILD, and Got Dirt. Environmental plans for curriculum for each grade level were developed with the schools.
- ◆ Connie partnered with Police Chiefs, Day Cares, Libraries, City and Town Governments, Teen Court, Economic Development Corporation, Parks Departments, Department of Health and Human Services, and much more.
- ◆ Connie is very passionate about health related topics and one way she supported this was by supervising multiple AmeriCorps Farm to School members that brought nutrition education and local produce connections to nearly 600 students annually in Waupaca County Schools.
- ◆ Connie acquired grant funding for all the schools to introduce Second Step materials for violence and bullying prevention. Schools were able to survey their students and help make changes to their environments.
- ◆ Connie was recognized for her efforts in Environmental Education as well as successful youth program awards at the state and national level in 4-H Youth Development.
- ◆ In 2007, Connie was honored with a UW-Colleges and UW-Extension Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Civic Engagement.
- ◆ Abert led strategic planning efforts across most communities in Waupaca County.
- ◆ Connie served as the Waupaca County UW-Extension Department Head for 2 different time frames.

This is just a start to the many programs and people Connie touched while in her position with Waupaca County UW-Extension. Please join us in recognizing her for her tremendous contributions. Connie and her husband now reside in St. Louis where they are closer to family.

~Penny Tank

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## **Farm to School in Waupaca County Enters Year 10 with New Educator**

The Farm to School program in Waupaca County began year ten this August! The team welcomed a new Farm to School Nutrition Educator, Michelle Burington, who will be teaching lessons on nutrition and local food to Waupaca County 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students, as well as supporting school gardens and representing local farmers and the farm to school movement at local events. Look for upcoming events including October's Farm to School Month celebrations and the popular Great Apple Crunch, where students all across the county (and country) will take a bite out of a local apple at the same time.



### **Meet Michelle!**

Michelle Burington is a registered dietitian with a passion for local, healthy foods. She is looking forward to promoting how local foods can be an easy, nutritious and delicious part of everyday life in Waupaca County. She is also a member of the Living the Waupaca Way coalition that works to encourage healthy lifestyles through good nutrition and physical activity in the community. In her free time, she enjoys photography, camping, cooking, and spending time with her family, husband and two dogs.

*~Kelly Hammond & Christi Gabrilka*

## **Waupaca County Suicide Prevention Coalition Invites Former Green Bay Packer to Speak About Mental Health**

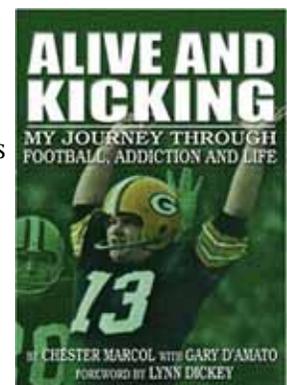
The Family Living Program works closely with area stakeholders as catalysts for positive change by responding to challenges facing families. In Waupaca County, mental health has been recognized as a top community concern through various community assessments.

Family Living Educator, Sandy Liang, has been working with the Waupaca County Suicide Prevention Coalition to explore effective responses to improve mental health and well-being of the county's youth, individuals and families. Solid relationships with community partners, such as through coalition work, means sharing of resources and expertise, leading to greater impact.

Liang's role in the coalition has included:

- Grant-writing to fund community education events
- Identifying gaps in coalition representation/networking to fill gaps
- Developing a comprehensive mental health resources directory to increase residents' knowledge and connection to mental health services
- Evaluation of group activities to measure effectiveness and impact

Each year, the coalition hosts a speaker as part of its goals for stigma reduction, increasing awareness of mental health as a public health issue and community education. The coalition will use a grant from the Waupaca Area Community Foundation to feature Chester Marcol, a famed kicker for the Green Bay Packers. Marcol will be speaking about his story of substance abuse, depression, attempted suicide—and hope. He is sober today, and works as an alcohol and drug counselor.



*Chester Marcol will be sharing his story of substance abuse and suicide, followed by a book signing at the Waupaca High School Auditorium on October 23rd, 2017 6:00pm—7:30pm*

*~Sandy Liang*

## **Field Day Highlights New Manure Application Equipment**

Reducing run-off, as well as odor, as part of the manure application process to farm fields is a growing concern for both farmers and non-farmers alike. Manure run-off can damage the environment and odor from manure can damage relationships in the neighborhood. That's why Greg Blonde, Waupaca County UW-Extension Agriculture Agent, helped organize and present a summer field day near Manawa on August 9<sup>th</sup>. Over eighty people attended to hear Dan Brick, a young successful sixth generation dairy farmer between Appleton and Green Bay discuss his first-hand experience using new manure application equipment called the Bazooka.

The Bazooka manure applicator (see picture below) is actually owned by the Outagamie County Land & Water Conservation Department and then loaned out to farmers interested in trying the new piece of equipment before buying their own or switching custom haulers. In addition to hearing how another farm was successfully using this new piece of equipment, field day participants also got to see field demonstrations during the afternoon and see for themselves how the Bazooka compared with surface application and more traditional manure injection equipment. A story about the field day event was recently featured in the WI State Farmer, with a multi-state circulation of more than 20,000 readers. Special thanks to Brian Haase and Greg Peterson with Waupaca County LWCD, as well as the Waupaca County Forage Council for helping coordinate this successful field day event.



*The "Bazooka", a new manure field applicator, is demonstrated during a UW-Extension/Forage Council Field Day. Over 80 people attended the August 9th event near Manawa.*

*~Greg Blonde*

## **Waupaca County Broadband Survey Closes; Over 600 Responses Received**

A process that began in January of 2016 with a county-wide meeting around the topic of broadband has just completed a milestone – 620 surveys were completed and the data is in the process of being analyzed. UW-Extension Community Development Educator Jessica Beckendorf worked closely with Waupaca County Planning & Zoning Director Ryan Brown and GIS Coordinator/LIO Ian Grasshoff to carefully select a random sample of over 2,300 residents. The survey was also advertised at libraries and schools. At the same time, one of the Leadership Waupaca County Class XVII (2016-2017) teams partnered with Jessica, Ryan Brown, and WCEDC Executive Director Dave Thiel to develop the survey questions. The raw survey data was used for a recent grant application that was awarded to Waupaca Online.

The interest in pursuing broadband expansion came directly from town, village, and city residents from across the county. During the fall of 2015, the topic came up repeatedly at meetings about comprehensive plan updates. Shortly after these meetings, the January county-wide meeting on broadband was held where citizens and elected leaders indicated their interest engaging in a collaborative broadband effort with town/village/city governmental bodies across the county.



Now that the survey has been completed, the data is being analyzed and will be shared in the near future. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact UW-Extension Community Development Educator Jessica Beckendorf.

*~Jessica Beckendorf*



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### **Introducing Our UW-Extension Area Extension Director**



We are pleased to welcome Catherine Neiswender as the new Area Extension Director for UW-Extension in our area. Catherine comes to this position with 19 years of experience working with UW-Extension as a regional educator and a county-based educator. She has also held several administrative positions within UW-Extension. Prior to accepting this position, she served as the Community Development Educator for Winnebago County UW-Extension.

The Area Extension Directors are part of the new nEXT Generation reorganization of UW-Extension. In her role, Catherine will work closely with county partners and UW-Extension staff in Outagamie, Winnebago, Waupaca and Calumet counties to maintain strong local programming to address issues and opportunities in the community.

Catherine is responsible for managing the resources for Cooperative Extension in this geographic area, while fostering partnerships with local organizations to identify and assess new opportunities in programming, funding and staffing.

What does she love about Extension? “Our work embodies the Wisconsin Idea - bringing the resources of the University to the corners of the state. Our dedicated educators are out in the community every day touching lives, supporting organizations, and collaborating to solve critical community issues. I have a deep appreciation for my colleagues that are engaged in doing this good work.”

Catherine hails from the Midwest and has called Appleton, WI home for 19 years. She has lived in Illinois, West Virginia, Virginia and Wyoming, but loves the Midwest best, especially the four seasons. Catherine and her husband have one son, age 5. In her free time you can find her spending time outside, playing with the UW Fox Valley Community Concert Band, and at her church.

“I want to better get to know the people, partners and opportunities in Waupaca County and the rest of the area. I’d welcome a conversation with you.” You can contact Catherine via email at [catherine.neiswender@ces.uwex.edu](mailto:catherine.neiswender@ces.uwex.edu). To learn more about Cooperative Extension visit [www.ces.uwex.edu](http://www.ces.uwex.edu)