



## Human Development and Relationships



Tierany Rugg, HDR Educator  
100% Appointment

The Winter 2026 StrongBodies session at NWTC in Aurora began 1/5/26 and will run until 2/25/26

**38 Participants** registered (**Total Contacts 278**)

- Upcoming Classes  
NWTC: Aurora Location – April 7<sup>th</sup>- May 28  
NRC: Florence Location – April 6<sup>th</sup> – May27

### Testimonies:

*"The final six months of 2025 were hell for me. My husband's physical condition deteriorated further, and he went into rehab.*

*In May, I was diagnosed with breast cancer, had surgery, and started Chemotherapy by July! So I would undergo 4+ hour chemo treatments, then drive to the nursing home and try to boost my husband up. I sat down constantly. When he came home bedridden, I realized how weak I had gotten. I saw this program, and I convinced my inner self to try it out. I was encouraged from the first contact with Tierany Rugg. Each Week I get stronger, meet new people, and become happier. Thank you, Strong Bodies"* – Strong Bodies Participant

*"Several years ago, I crouched down to get something from the back of a low cabinet and discovered I couldn't get up. Couldn't get a grip on the counter, oven door, or refrigerator door. Since taking this class, I've never been in that scary situation again."* – Strong Bodies Participant

*"I especially enjoyed being with everyone. The social part of the program was great. I appreciated the wide assortment of weights, and there were enough for everyone. The volunteers were wonderful. Ms. Rugg was very positive and cheerful and set a good tone for the class."* – Strong Bodies Participant

## Triple P Statewide (Reducing Family Conflict)

Teen Triple P – Reducing Family Conflict is an evidence-based parenting program for parents of teenagers experiencing frequent conflict, communication challenges, or heightened tension at home. HDR Educator taught this program in a statewide virtual class, supporting parents in developing practical strategies to manage conflict calmly, strengthen family relationships, and promote positive teen behavior through consistent, supportive parenting.

**12 Participants**

## Raising WI Children – Speaking your Child's Love Language

is a parent education program focused on helping caregivers understand and respond to their child's emotional needs through the Five Love Languages framework. Florence County HDR Educator facilitated this program for **37 participants**, supporting parents in strengthening connections, improving communication, and building more positive, nurturing relationships with their children.



## Just in Time Parenting

Coordinated the monthly e-newsletter (Just in Time Parenting) for parents/caregivers of 0-5 year olds which provides age-paced developmental and parenting information. The goal is to improve parents' knowledge, increase positive parent-child interaction, and support children's well-being. **9 Newsletters**

## PACT

The Parent and Child Together (PACT) program supported families with children transitioning into 4K by focusing on easing school transitions and strengthening emotional security. Sessions addressed topics such as transitions to school routines and the use of security blankets to support children's self-regulation and comfort. The program also served as an outreach opportunity to introduce and promote the Family Check-Up program to participating families. A total of **11 families** participated.

## Family Check Up

The Florence County School District identified a need to support families in strengthening parenting skills and family management practices to improve children's social, emotional, and academic outcomes. In response, UW-Madison Extension partnered with the district to implement the Family Check-Up (FCU) program, an evidence-based, family-centered intervention aimed at promoting positive family functioning and preventing problem behaviors and mental health concerns. Outreach efforts included FCU promotions and family sign-ups during Parent-Teacher Conferences, followed by a Family Check-Up Information Dinner in December, which brought together for a shared, family-style meal and a structured program overview.



### Family Dinner- Speaking Your Child's Love Language

This family education event focused on helping caregivers better understand and respond to their child's emotional needs through the framework of "love languages." Participants learned practical strategies to strengthen parent-child relationships, improve communication, and foster positive connections within the family. The dinner format encouraged informal discussion, peer learning, and relationship-building among families. **A total of 19 Parents/Caregivers and children attended. 5 FCU Staff members facilitated the event.**



### Teacher In Service & Lunch in

This professional development session provided educators with practical family engagement and child development strategies aligned with classroom needs. Delivered in a "lunch-in" format to maximize participation, the session emphasized actionable tools educators could immediately apply in their work with students and families. A total of **17 staff members participated** in the training.

## WRIC Outdoor Education

The HDR Educator helps coordinator and facilitate monthly outdoor education events for families and nature enthusiasts, where participants engage in hands-on activities such as wildlife habitat creation, survival skills workshops, and environmental stewardship programs to foster a deeper connection with nature, promote sustainable practices, and encourage community involvement in conservation efforts.

### Chili in the Woods

Chili in the Woods was a large-scale community engagement event designed to bring families and community members together in an informal, welcoming outdoor setting. The event promoted connection, relationship-building, and awareness of local Extension programs and family resources while reducing social isolation and strengthening community ties. An estimated **130 participants** attended.

### Workshop Topics

Trout with Greg Matzke (1/27)

Maple Syrup Production with Fred Hedmark & Ernie Dagastino (2/17)

Trout Fishing the Wild Rivers with Chris Collier (Rescheduled) (4/19)

Northwoods Foraging: Eat your Weedies with Maragret Gerhard (5/19)



## Other Educational Programs, Professional Development & Program Administration

- Statewide Virtual Program Promotion (**Friday Folders- 225**)
- Family Check Up Flyers (**Friday Folders- 225**)
- Strong Bodies Volunteer Management
- Project Graduation Meetings
- Donuts with Grownups Flyer Promotion
- Raising WI Children Conference
- Responsible Employee Training
- WRIC (Wild River Interpretive Center) Board Meetings
- AODA & Mental Health Coalition (Quarterly/Ongoing)
- Program Manager (Family Engagement and Relationships) Check-In
- FER (Family Engagement & Relationships) Monthly Meeting and Regional Meeting (Virtual)
- HDRI (Human Development & Relationships Institute) Monthly Meetings
- Completed Monthly Planning & Reporting
- Vacation Time



### College Discover Tour Parent & Student Orientation

The College Discovery Tour Orientation prepared parents, guardians, and students for the upcoming two-day college exploration experience. The session covered program goals, expectations, safety guidelines, required forms, and key logistics such as transportation, meals, lodging, and a detailed itinerary. Families left with a clear understanding of the tour's purpose and what students need to be ready for a successful trip.

**70 Participants**



### 4-H Cloverbud Club

4-H Cloverbuds club meets once a month the third Tuesday of the month. The goal is to introduce youth in K-2 grade to 4-H and provide an opportunity for them to explore their sparks and provide a sense of belonging. For example, this winter we learned about the brief history of snowshoes and how to use them and then practiced.

**20 Youth 5 Parent/Grandparent Volunteers**

### TORPEDOs

A classroom club for high school students (TORPEDO: Together Our Responsibility Publicly Embraces Dedication and Opportunity) where youth learn life skills through community engagement and service and give back to the Florence Community. Members participate in monthly meetings and volunteer for at least one activity or event. The 4-H Educator provides ongoing leadership, mentoring and support for the TORPEDO Club.

**40 TORPEDO Members**

**Vending Machine:** TORPEDO members follow the USDA Smart Snack Criteria to order healthy snacks for the school vending machine. Members order food through the school and Amazon and then stock the vending machine weekly to provide smart snack options to middle and high school students. 4-H Educator provides training and assists with purchasing and provides program oversight.

**2 TORPEDO Members, 384 Students and Staff**

**Weekend Backpack Food Program:** The Backpack Food Program provides free non-perishable, easy-to-prepare food for children in elementary school to high school to help them to avoid hunger over the weekend from food insecurity. TORPEDO students are actively engaged in this community project to help fight hunger in Florence. TORPEDO students learn about food insecurity, confidentiality, and food ordering to support the Weekend Backpack Food Program. TORPEDO students assemble and distribute 35 food bags a week.

**35 participants 3 TORPEDO Members – 636 Bags of Food Distributed**

**Bobcat Buddies:** Bobcat Buddies is developed and organized by the 4-H Educator. The program fosters positive relationships between middle and high school TORPEDO members and elementary students who benefit from having a consistent, caring role model. The program promotes social-emotional growth, leadership development, and a sense of belonging for both mentors and mentees. The program has grown tremendously. 4-H educator provides training, weekly communication between mentors and school staff, and provides program updates. **20 TORPEDO Mentors 26 Elementary Student Mentees**

## Food, Fun & Fitness & Outdoor Adventure Programs:

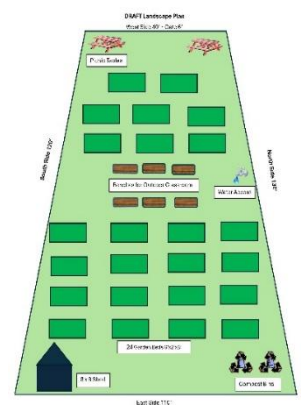
The 4-H Educator has been actively coordinating planning efforts for both the Food, Fun & Fitness (FFF) and Outdoor Adventure (OA) summer programs. Significant progress continues to be made:

- **Hiring Youth Leaders:** Currently in the process of hiring FFF youth leaders. The application deadline was extended due to low initial interest, and interviews will be scheduled in the coming weeks.
- **Summer Food Service Program:** Collaborated with Ms. Holly to complete the Summer Food Service Program application for the school and submitted the required letter to the health department. Also completed the four-hour SFSP training.
- **Health Coordinator:** Completed the Medication Administration Basics training along with additional online medical trainings to be authorized to administer medications during programs. Asked Health & Wellbeing educator to also be trained in order to provide additional support one of our participants that has diabetes.

## NWTC Community Garden Project:

The garden beds at NWTC have been unused since 2024 when Ms. Jeanne retired. The beds are aging and need to be replaced, and the fence either needs to be repaired or extended due to ongoing deer issues. At this time, we do not have an FFF teacher with the knowledge or interest to take on the gardens, so I reached out to Aurora Parks and Recreation. They expressed strong enthusiasm for championing this project and transforming it into a community garden for Aurora residents.

I coordinated a meeting with Aurora Parks & Recreation, Susan Moll from NWTC, and myself. They are extremely excited about the opportunity, and together we developed a plan for revitalizing the garden. I wrote and submitted a \$30,000 grant application on behalf of the Aurora Parks and Recreation Group to TORO to support the project, and we will find out in May whether it is funded.



This has been a wonderful collaborative experience, and I'm grateful for their willingness to lead this revitalization effort.

## Other Educational Programs, Professional Development & Program Administration

- Served on the search and selection committee for Round 1 of the Area 4 AED hiring. After a failed search, I'm continuing to serve on the search and selection committee for round 2.
- Continuing to write letters of recommendation for scholarships for TORPEDO members & letters for NHS applicants.
- Planning and developing the College Discovery Tour.
- Participated in two-day Positive Youth Development All Institute Meeting in Wausau for professional development and networking with 4-H colleagues.
- Wrote an article for 4-H State Newsletter on the College Discovery Tour
- Completed Monthly Planning and Reporting.
- Providing guidance and support to Big Shooters volunteers as they are navigating some adult volunteer dynamics.
- Participate in online 4-H Meetings, including the Northern Region Planning Committee.
- One-on-one meetings with 4-H Program Manager.
- Serve on Coordinated Services Team, AODA/MH Coalition.
- Participated in interview with Mr. Knox for his Community Equity & Justice Class

### Botvin LifeSkills Training

The HWB Educator is in the Elementary School every other week teaching grades 3, 4, and 5 the Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) Curriculum. The Botvin LST started the week of January 19<sup>th</sup> and will be completed prior to June 5<sup>th</sup>. LST programming will continue next school year with grades 3, 4, 5 and grade 9 in the High School.

The Botvin LST is a 10-week, evidence-based program that teaches:

- Drug Resistance Skills, including Smoking Information, Advertising, and Assertiveness
- Personal Self-Management, including Self-Esteem, Decision-Making, and Dealing with Stress
- General Social Skills, including Communication Skills and Social Skills

**87 Elementary Students (Grades 3, 4, and 5) bi-weekly at Florence Elementary School**

### Food, Fun & Fitness Program

The HWB Educator will be teaching at the Food, Fun & Fitness Program during the summer at the Florence Elementary and Aurora NWTC locations. Lesson planning has begun to make Nutrition Education out of this World! See above 4H Educator section for more information on FFF.

**Medication Management Trainings:** Completed multiple online trainings on Medication Management & Administration and Diabetes Training in preparation for the Food, Fun & Fitness Program.

### Florence Foodie WI Instagram

The Florence Foodie WI Instagram account is up and running! This social media page focuses on healthy, budget-friendly meals & snacks for busy Florence County families. It is in collaboration with Florence County Health Department and UW-Extension Florence County Health & Well-Being. Educator will be trained through UW-Extension Module: How to Make an Instructional Video prior to posting content. Videos will be posted as part of a pilot program over 5-6 weeks; starting post date is to-be-determined. Relevant content from other local and state organizations (Florence Co HD, WIC, Feeding America of Eastern WI) are being reposted on an ongoing basis.

### Florence County Stock Boxes

Extension Staff supported ADRC with Stock Box Distribution in February and March. The January date and rescheduled dates were cancelled due to weather. The HWB Educator will assist with Stock Boxes every month, including distribution of boxes and providing indirect educational materials on healthy eating and active living. The educational materials for March focused on nutrient-dense foods and the importance of staying hydrated.

**February – 248 boxes distributed**

**March – 140 boxes distributed**

## Other Educational Programs, Professional Development & Program Administration

- **Other Educational Programs, Professional Development & Program Administration**
- **Onboarding:** Hired January 2026, currently going through the onboarding process. This includes regular, ongoing meetings with our AED, Program Manager, other Extension Educators, and community partners. This also includes trainings and webinars, coalition meetings, rapport-building, seeking out information, resources, and programming that will help reduce identified gaps in our community.
- **Strong Bodies Leader Training:** In April 2026, HWB Educator will be trained in Madison, at no cost to the county, to lead StrongBodies. The goal is to build on current Florence County StrongBodies Program; leading at least one new class. See HRD Educator's section on Strong Bodies for more information.
- **AODA/MH Coalition Meeting:** All the Educators within Florence County Extension are members of the AODA/MH Coalition. The next meeting is set for April 16th.
- **School Board and Audit and Budget Board Meetings:** This Educator attended Board Meetings, on March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, respectively, to provide an introduction as a new employee and to provide an update to Boards members on the progress of the Botvin LST.
- **Parents and Children Together (PACT):** This Educator and the HRD Educator attended PACT on January 29<sup>th</sup> at Florence Elementary School. This Educator will attend PACT on March 12<sup>th</sup> and provide parents and children with education on nutrition.
- **Donuts with Grownups:** UW-Extension staff including this Educator assisted with Donuts with Grownups at the Florence Elementary School on February 13<sup>th</sup>. This Educator greeted participants, helped participants navigate the space, and provided handouts for future programming.
- **WeCOPE (Connecting with Our Positive Emotions):** This Educator attended the WeCOPE Trainer Touchbase on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, and will participate in the Spring WeCOPE Series from March 31<sup>st</sup> to May 12<sup>th</sup>. WeCOPE empowers adults with evidence-based coping strategies to manage stress, build resilience, and navigate life's challenges with confidence and emotional strength. After participating in the series, this Educator will co-facilitate a 7-week program for the Florence County community.
- **Professional Development Grant:** This Educator submitted this grant on March 2<sup>nd</sup> to reduce costs to be trained in and implement the Bingocize Program. Grant awards will be made the first week of May.
- **Bingocize:** Regardless of if the Professional Development Grant is awarded, this Educator will be trained in and implement the Bingocize Program, with funding from ADRC. Bingocize is for sedentary older adults and people with disabilities who want to reduce their risk of falls, improve nutrition, and have fun in a social setting. Bingocizers play a Bingo game that includes a series of strategically inserted exercises and educational health and wellness information. Bingocizers rest while numbers are called for the Bingo game and receive a prize at the end. This 10-week, twice per week program will be offered to the Florence county community starting in/around August 2026. If the grant is awarded, our goal is to also offer the program to Florence County nursing home residents in addition to the general community.

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## Amber Rehberg – Area Extension Director

Florence, Forest, Vilas, Price, Taylor, Lincoln, Langlade, Oneida, Vilas, Forest  
County Potawatomi and Lac du Flambeau

## Area 3 & Area 4 AED Update

The start of the year has been active across both Area 3 and Area 4 as I continue providing leadership and support during this period of transition. My focus remains on maintaining strong communication with staff and county partners while ensuring programming and operations move forward smoothly. Hiring has been a major priority. I am serving on the search committee for the Area 4 Extension Director position, which will support Florence, Forest, Lac du Flambeau, Vilas, and Forest County Potawatomi. Our first-round recruitment did not result in a successful hire, and we have launched the second search. Additional hiring efforts include the Forest County Community Development Educator position, which will strengthen local planning and community engagement. Alongside staffing work, I am helping Forest County initiate a Strategic Planning Committee and process to support long-term county priorities. Also worked with Taylor County, to provide a leadership workshop for department administrators. Mid-Year Reviews were just completed for educators, where spent time connecting with staff, to better understand their needs, and support their professional growth.