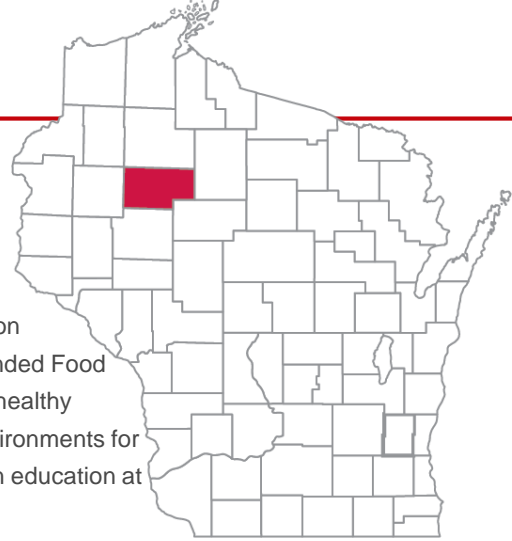




Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
RUSK COUNTY



Healthy Choices, Healthy Lives



FoodWise is federally funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). We advance healthy eating habits, active lifestyles and healthy community environments for Wisconsin residents with limited incomes through nutrition education at the individual, community and systems levels.

The Challenge

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the food security of **Rusk County** residents due to income and job loss, as well as significant changes in local, regional, and national food systems. Based on increases in **Rusk County** residents participating in FoodShare and federal Pandemic EBT benefits, we see a greater need for members of our community in accessing food that is healthy, safe, and affordable. FoodWise educators support our community by providing education on how families can stretch their food dollars in these difficult times and continue to put healthy meals on the table in their homes.

Rusk County has seen a 16% increase in Food Share participation

(including adults and children) from prior to the pandemic.



Based on comparison of FoodShare participation in February, 2020 and September, 2020. Data from Wisconsin Department of Health & Human Services.

Community IMPACTS

- In response to the Covid-19 Pandemic, a priority was to remain in strong communication with county food pantries, connecting them to area pantry conversations to allow for resource sharing, and to answer questions that pertained to their needs and situations.
- Remained in contact with our Direct Education partners, mainly schools, as they navigated and developed new procedures for education delivery, dependent on their current situation of in-school or virtual.
- Transitioned direct education programming to virtual lessons. Direct Ed programming via virtual delivery has proven to be successful and can meet the needs of the various county partners. Communication and cooperation are the keys!
- The Rusk Co. Community Garden was developed despite the pandemic by following the CDC guidelines as well as being an outside venue where people could work alone or distance themselves from others. The contributions made to the Connections Food Pantry were valued by the visitors to the pantry to fulfill their food shortages and nutritional needs.



ACHIEVING MORE TOGETHER

UW-Madison Division of Extension works alongside the people of Wisconsin to deliver practical educational programs where people live and work – on the farm, in schools and throughout urban and rural communities. In **Rusk County**, FoodWise partners with schools, ICAA, County Food Pantries, Head Start, and Workforce Resource to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in our communities.



FoodWise In-School Nutrition Education Goes Virtual

COVID-19, as everyone knows, has disrupted life as it was. Education is valuable in changing the habits and mindset of individuals of all ages. Implementation and repetitive **nutrition education** is shown to be valuable with children of young ages in changing their habits and mindset about eating healthy. Education needs to continue, pandemic or not!

With the disruption of In-School education, directional change happened rapidly with the learning of and transferring to, virtual education. Learning skills for curriculum development with various virtual platform delivery models was the forefront quest for Nutrition Educators. Students and educators alike, are discovering this new educational technology for teaching & learning.



Through nutrition education, students have the opportunity to taste samples of vegetables and fruits.

Students showed their increase of knowledge regarding healthy eating before the onset of COVID-19:

- An increase in daily fruit consumption Everyday or Most Days on an average of 20-30%.
- An increase in daily vegetable consumption Everyday or Most Days on an average of 10-15%.
- An increase of choosing a healthy snack Everyday or Most Days by 20-35%.



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Increase Access to Fresh Fruits & Vegetables

Personal gardening to obtain more produce or increasing one's access to fresh vegetables/fruits at a food pantry are positive moves toward better food security for those in poverty. Therefore, projects that involve community gardens and food pantries, create positive changes for communities and their citizens who are experiencing poverty.

FoodWise is working in Rusk County to bring about change in people's access to fresh vegetables/fruits that are grown at the community garden. The *Rusk County Community Garden* is in its 1st year and donates produce to the Connections Food Pantry, as well as providing for the families who garden their own plots.

"I have learned so much about growing my own food! I have increased my physical activity and am eating so many more fresh vegetables and fruit that I grew myself!" –RCCG Gardener

The *Rusk County Community Garden* was developed this year and had its growing pains, as all things new. The Ladysmith Connections & More Food Pantry supplied the land for the garden alongside its building. County residents plowed and donated time to create the garden that has ten 10'x20' plots. Seven of the plots were rented out to gardeners (14% income eligible) and 3 community plots donated produce to the county's food pantry. The garden received a donation from American Family Insurance in support of its development, which provided a 6' fence to keep out the deer friends that wanted to visit. In the first year, 140 lbs. of produce was donated; success for a new 'garden' on the block!



Deer fence installed by many willing hands at the new Rusk Co. Community Garden!



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