



Embracing Aging in Wisconsin: UW-Extension Support

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In 2010, nearly 1 in 7 Wisconsin residents were 65 years of age or older, and our aging population in Wisconsin continues to grow. By 2035, in some rural Wisconsin counties this population will be between 35-42%. The growth is due to changing demographics, including the aging of the “baby boomer” population, increasing life expectancies, and a smaller number of children and younger adults.

As Wisconsinites live longer and healthier lives, older adults are a dynamic resource in our communities with decades of wisdom and experiences to share as active community members. Supporting older adults in their efforts to be healthy, remain independent, and plan for the future is critical as communities respond to this “age wave.”

Response

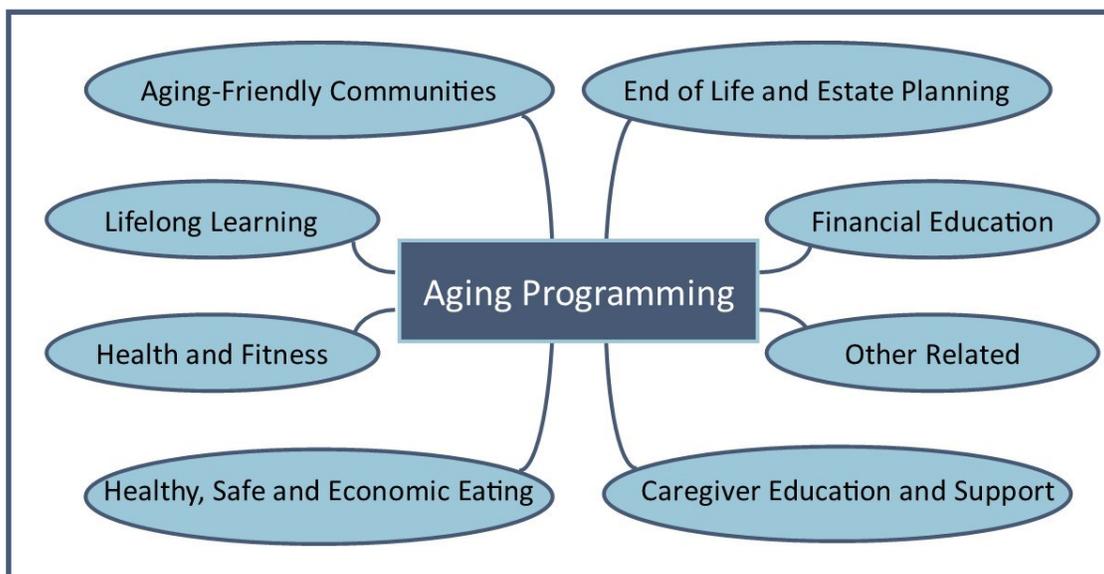
UW-Extension builds individual, family, and community capacity to create conditions that enable older adults to thrive and be active contributors in their communities.

Family Living Educators in 90% of counties offer at least one aging-related program or initiative, with an average of 4 aging-related programs per county. These programs address several areas, from the unique health and fitness needs of older adults to family caregiver support.

Extension educators work with an average of 4.8 partners across their aging-related programming.

Partnerships are diverse, including:

- public and private senior service providers (80%)
- nonprofit organizations (43%)
- local government agencies (40%)
- medical providers (35%)
- religious groups (30%)



Family Living Programs Impact Report

These community partnerships are critical to these aging-related initiatives. These collaborations improve community outcomes by:

- leveraging the strengths of multiple organizations and creating opportunities to reach new audiences
- providing more programming
- facilitating community-level change
- developing creative solutions to the emerging issues impacting older adults throughout the state

Outcomes

Extension programming has helped older individuals become stronger, smarter, and better connected. After Extension programs, participants eat more healthfully and are better able to manage their money and plan for their future.

Healthy Eating

In 2016, Juneau County Extension educator conducted a series of lessons on eating fruits and vegetables with 173 older adults. Following the program, 50% planned to eat at least 1 more serving a day of fruits and vegetables.

End-of-Life and Estate Planning

Extension educators in Burnett and Polk counties offer annual end-of-life planning conference called “Final Affairs,” which shares information about end-of-life issues, communication skills, and common misconceptions surrounding end-of-life concerns. In 2016, one participant commented “Wonderful conference and service to the community” and another noted learning that “pre-planning, knowing your options and asking questions is important.”



Caregiver Education and Support

Outagamie County Extension offers an innovative Caregiver Cafe program, which promotes conversation among caregivers and provides caregivers opportunities for learning and coaching. The program has shown promise in building community relationships and providing support and respite time to attendees.

Health and Fitness

Extension educators throughout Wisconsin offer evidence-based programs targeting common health concerns for older adults, including bone density, strength, and balance. One popular program, [Strong Women/StrongBodies](#), reached over 16,000 participants in 2015. Evaluations show that the class improves participants’ strength, balance, and flexibility, potentially preventing falls and improving the health of participants.

Aging-Friendly Communities

In Iron County, Extension-led efforts to enhance the community’s aging-friendliness resulted in increased life-long learning opportunities (through [Fe University](#)), as well as the creation of a county committee to address the issue of transportation for senior citizens. In Manitowoc County, an educator’s work in this area has result in the creating of memory cafes, educational opportunities for businesses and organizations, emergency plans and services to help caregivers, and a solidified support network for those with dementia and their caregivers.

Other Impacts

Our programming helps communities tap into older adults’ wisdom and experience. In Shawano County, 38% of the women participating in the StrongWomen/StrongBodies program reported that they have become more involved in volunteering within the community.

To learn more, contact your Family Living Agent/Educator:

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