



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
MILWAUKEE COUNTY



2024 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

SMALL BUSINESS & PERSONAL FINANCE

The **Community Development Program** created small business development and financial literacy workshops in partnership with local organizations. These workshops provided 40 minority small business owners with the tools to start and run their businesses. Surveys showed 97% of participants “felt their knowledge level increased significantly after attending the workshop sessions.” The workshops provided essential information on how to structure a business, handle business credit, manage financial statements, and create a budget—areas that are often significant challenges to success. One small business owner who participated in all of the workshops said: **“Learning more about business finance and small business concepts has helped me to have a better outlook on life and my future. I feel more confident that barriers are being broken for minority businesses in Milwaukee.”**

As part of the *Building the Path to Success* workshop, the **Financial Education Program** led five 6-week sessions on rent and financial education for incarcerated individuals at the Milwaukee County Reintegration Facility. One participant, over the age of 50 and budgeting for the first time, shared that after release, he used the skills he learned to manage his money and eventually buy his first home. This program is especially important because many individuals leaving incarceration face significant financial barriers as they reenter the community.

72% of participants identified as Black or Latino

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The **4-H Program** partnered with 12 schools and youth-serving organizations to provide a variety of six-week series that included: archery, chess, creative writing and expressions, Lego Play, Lego Robotics, and science labs. Youth participants were introduced to new interests, increased their knowledge, and developed life skills while having fun. One youth said they learned, “How to concentrate more with chess and robotics.” Other youth participants said: “I learned working as a team,” “I liked chess because I love playing it with my friends,” “I learned how to code a robot,” “When we do something, we should take our time.”

78% of the 179 participants identified as Black or Latino



Educator Erica Carter at the Funding Forward event for minority small business owners and nonprofit directors.



Educator Tahnee Aguirre with a Reentry Ready class and My Way Out partners at the Community Reintegration Center.



Youth in a 4-H Archery Club practice at their school.

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The **4-H Program** partnered with Highland Community School to create a 4-H gardening and cooking club with ten 5th-7th grade students. 4-H members picked produce in early fall, pulled weeds, and planted seeds to overwinter. As the weather got colder, the youth made West-African inspired peanut stew using greens, black eyed peas, garlic, and tomatoes from the garden. They also made apple pie while learning about the spices traditionally used, and made pizzas from scratch using tomatoes from the garden. A mother of one of the youths said: **“This club has by far been the best of the school for [my son] this year and we are really grateful for it!”**

The **Growing Connections Program** hosted 31 paid internships where youth worked with adults to learn gardening skills, regenerative practices, community placemaking and engagement, and to develop job and life skills through their employment in garden spaces. Youth interns reported that the program helped them develop essential communication, problem-solving, and social skills that will benefit them now and in the future. **“The program is teaching me that it is easy to open up to people.”**

>75% of youth and adult attendees felt more hopeful about their role in the community.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

FoodWise nutrition educators led a total of 1,422 hours of in-person lessons engaging with 2900 participants, including children, families, and seniors in Milwaukee County. The lessons cover healthy eating, sampling nutritious foods, planning and preparing affordable and nourishing meals, and promoting active lifestyles. **“Thanks to this class, I now cook more at home. I made chicken and potatoes just last night. I like to make more homemade meals.”** - Community young adult

The program partnered with over 65 organizations, including 15 schools, 5 food pantries, 12 farmers markets, and various community centers, impacting more than 33,925 community members, with 16,480 newly engaged individuals. In addition, FoodWise supported five community gardens.

Participants at schools included 1,617 students and 46 parents from ALBA, Doerfler, Mitchell, Kagel, and various other schools representing diverse backgrounds in our community.

Participant demographics by race: 2% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1% Asian, 42% Black, less than 1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 19% White, less than 1% identify as two or more races, and 35% prefer not to respond or are unknown. By ethnicity: 41% Hispanic, 36% Non-Hispanic, 23% Unknown/prefer not to respond.

66% of participants were youth

34% of participants were adults



Youth from the Highland Community School 4-H Gardening/Cooking Club were amazed by the pie they made from scratch.



Growing Connections youth gather at the Beehive Gardens, a gathering space that youth and adults activated, designed, and built on 5th & Beacher Streets in Milwaukee



Educator Jimena Zamudio preparing food samples for a nutrition lesson at a Food Pantry.

HEALTH & NUTRITION

FoodWise taught 148 Strong Bodies sessions at 8 different sites throughout Milwaukee County in English and Spanish. One participant shared that the program helped her improve her arm and core strength enough to hold her young grandchildren once again. This program is important because Milwaukee County has a high incidence of falls in the home for people aged 60 and over. StrongBodies helps people maintain strength and mobility as they age.

>80% of participants were aged 60+ **60%** of participants were Black and Latino

FoodWise partnered with the United Community Center to create a food garden that provided 50 seniors with access to fresh, culturally preferred, and nutritious food. The garden also provided an opportunity for them to gather and engage in gardening activities and nutrition lessons in Spanish. The seniors learned how to make healthier food choices and prepare simple, affordable meals. Additionally, the program organized a guided tour of the Brown Deer Farmers Market in Spanish for 26 senior center participants, teaching them how to use the Milwaukee Market Match program to double their food benefits. **“Thank you for giving our seniors this opportunity [a guided tour of the farmers market], and for giving this joy to our seniors.”** - United Community Center Staff

URBAN AGRICULTURE

The **Urban Agriculture Program** provided community garden and microfarm rental access to 378 individual households, totaling 1,180 individual participants. These Milwaukee County residents grew vibrant and diverse gardens filled with flowers, staple crops, culturally important herbs and vegetables, ecologically vital native plants, and more in 1,325 900 square-foot equivalent plots across 65 acres of County-owned land and 2 non-County-owned sites. Conservation of Milwaukee County’s soil, water, and biodiversity resources were major programming themes in the 2024 season. These themes resulted in changes to field management and communications with growers on soil health, pollinator habitat preservation, and pest management practices.

“The gardens provide not only vegetables for me and my family, but also a mental escape from the stresses of daily life.” – Community Gardener

46% identified as Asian, Black or African American, Latino/Hispanic, or more than one race



Strong Bodies participants learn basic strength training in community with help from Educators Maricela Pantoja and Denise Clark.



Participants at the United Community Center gather around their first food garden after a fun planting day.



Beekpeeping students learn to extract honey and wax from beehives at community gardens.



4-H youth explore new interests at 6-week youth programs.



Youth from our Milwaukee 4-H Programs explored the UW-Madison campus during a science and gardening event.



Youth from the Highland Community School 4-H Gardening/Cooking Club enjoyed eating pizza they made from scratch.



Youth at Chess Club



Growing Connections youth preparing the land and planting the first trees in the food forest at the Beehive Garden.