

# **JACKSON COUNTY EXTENSION & EDUCATION COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE**

## **AGRICULTURE EDUCATION**

### **STEVE OKONEK**

I have lived in Jackson County since 1997 and I have worked in Western Wisconsin since 1991. I grew up on a small farm in Burnett County, Wisconsin. After graduating high school, I served two years in the Army as a tank crewman. After the Army I attended UW-River Falls where I received a bachelors in farm management and a minor in animal science. I met my wife, Julie, at UW-RF and we were married in 1991. We have one son, David, in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. I worked as a crop consultant from 1991-2001 in Jackson and surrounding counties. We purchased our farm near Taylor in January 1997. We dairy and hog farmed until 2010. I began working with Extension in January 2011 as an interim educator in Trempealeau County. I was hired full time with Extension in October of 2012. I received a Master's in Agronomy via distance education from Iowa State in December 2017. Julie is the full-time farmer and manages our operation that we expanded in the last few years with rented buildings. Julie contract feeds 10,000 hogs per year. I enjoy running, gardening, and downhill skiing. Spending time with my family is a high priority for me.

#### Extension roles

Extension is exciting and enjoyable work for me. I like the variety of work that I do each day. I am most passionate about soil and water conservation and enjoy getting information to farmers about soil conservation that enhances their bottom line.

I am co-chairing a team that is delivering soil health education to extension educators. As you know, extension educators come with a variety of backgrounds. Not everyone is well versed in soil science. It is the goal of the soil health professional development team to provide resources, knowledge, and contacts around soil health to other educators.

I also serve on the Committee for Academic Staff Issues (CASI). CASI is a shared governance committee that advises university administration on issues affecting academic staff. CASI meets bi-monthly via zoom. Under normal times the meetings are quarterly in-person at a central location. In-person meetings were typically five hours long. Zoom meetings are now one or two hours so we are meeting more frequently.

#### Recent Jackson County events

Pasture walk at Nathan and Karen Kling's farm near Taylor. Ten people attended and we had a beautiful day for the first in-person event since the COVID lockdown. Another pasture walk is planned for October at Steve and Pat Kling's farm.



### Future programming in Jackson County

Programming will be offered in agronomy, farm management, dairy science, and other needs as they become evident. I have worked closely with Jamey and Trisha and co-programmed with them. Programs will be moved around both counties as best I can to meet the needs of the people of both Trempealeau and Jackson Counties.

I am currently working with Erin Sylva to develop an educational program for giant ragweed control in organic fields. I hope this can be delivered in-person and more topics can be added. We will see.

The grain marketing group meetings that have been held in Melrose will continue depending on how we are able to deliver programs.

I look forward to working in Jackson County and I think it will be a great fit to combine Trempealeau and Jackson Counties.

Jackson County Extension Education Committee  
FoodWise Report for 8/1/20 – 8/30/20



Extension  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

**FoodWise Projects, Events & Professional Development - April Duval, Coordinator:**

- FoodWise webinars and updates, curriculum lesson plan share out webinars
- Dean's Extension webinars and calls for supervisors and staff
- FoodWise curriculum workgroup: Show Me Nutrition Grade 2, nominated to take the lead on this group: created Google folder to organize materials/share lesson plans, set up a doodle poll to determine upcoming meetings dates and time, and led Zoom meetings. Reviewed curriculum and lesson plans for MyPlate lesson, grain lesson, and vegetable lesson. Uploaded a summary of each lesson's recommendations to google docs for others in the group to add to and edit for future share out statewide.
- Calls with Nutrition Educator Sandy to discuss programming changes, updates, plans for telecommuting, check in on how she is doing, etc. Mid-point review with Sandy.
- My mid-point evaluation with Area Extension Director Pat Malone
- Completed and uploaded weekly telecommuting work plans into the Jackson google drive folder: update weekly and submit. Completed September telecommuting plan for Extension.
- Extension website and Facebook page posts and updates on Food Security and Food Safety:

<https://jackson.extension.wisc.edu/nutrition-education/food-security-resources-in-jackson-county/>

<https://www.facebook.com/extension.jacksoncounty/>

## Recipe of the Week

- Slice a bell pepper horizontally to make rings 1/2 inch thick
- Place rings in nonstick pan
- Crack an egg into the middle of the ring
- Fry 2 mins on medium heat
- Flip carefully

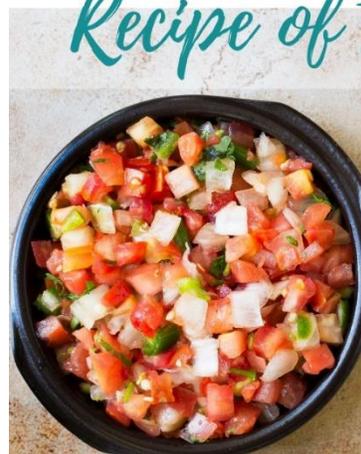
*Enjoy!*



## Recipe of the Week

### Pico de Gallo

- Dice tomatoes, garlic, onions, peppers, cilantro or basil
- Toss with lime juice, salt, and pepper
- Enjoy with whole grain tortilla chips!





## Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

### UW-Madison Division of Extension Jackson County Educator Summary

**Karla Gearing - August 2020**

#### **Major educational and research activities**

Completed 8 week course of Highlights of Taking Care of You with audience of relative caregivers working with Jackson Co. DHHS. Feedback from participants was positive and follow-up information will be provided for the MSFP 10-14 program for these caregivers and their youth to further enhance their social-emotional learning.

Attended 6 day training for Learning to Breathe Program that provides stress-management skills to community audiences. Curriculum focuses on environmental and situational awareness, mindful attention skills, and techniques to calm the body and mind. Efforts to provide this program in the Middle School virtually will be pursued.

Participated in work group for Healthy Schools Initiative to collaborate with community schools on finding opportunity for improvements in students' physical activity level and nutritional food sources.

F2S is up and running. Provided on-site orientation to Maya Peske and have been attending training and tending to the logistical set-up of the program.

#### **Covid-related Activities**

Conducted the monthly Together for Jackson County Kids meeting. Discussed opportunity to provide lanyards to the schools to assist with mask hygiene. Possibility of holding QPR sessions virtually with the schools and other virtual supports to assist with student and staff well-being.

Attended Covid-19 Addressing Social Isolation and Loneliness workshop.

Viewed Dean's Covid-19 Communication Updates

Participated in Indigenous Culture Series Part 2: Worldview of Pandemic and Social Unrest Webinar

Professional Development: Untangled (guiding teenage girls through the seven transitions into adulthood)

# Jackson County Extension & Education Communication Committee



4-H August 18<sup>th</sup> – September 15<sup>th</sup>

## 4-H Highlights

**Clover Collage Project Boxes:** 5 Project boxes will be offered to both counties to support distance learning. The boxes will include; Cake decorating, Pillowcases, Bird Houses/toolboxes, Wisconsin Fish ID, Photo Chromatic Slime! All of these will include the core materials for the project and the lesson plan for the project if a family chooses to not participate in the virtual learning sessions. These will be available for pick up in the office and families will be able to select extra materials for project boxes so that their whole family can participate. I am working on getting youth leaders to teach some of these projects for the virtual part.

## Volunteers Highlights

**Virtual and In-person Meetings:** I have been working with volunteers in both a virtual and in-person setting. This summer has been very different as I have not had as much contact with volunteers as I normally would. I have been having in person meetings since July and I have had some good turn outs for meetings.

## Key Meetings

- August 20<sup>th</sup>
  - Club Leader Support meeting
  - Juntos Team Meeting
- August 23<sup>rd</sup>
  - Trempealeau County Virtual Club Meeting
- August 24<sup>th</sup>
  - Trempealeau County Leaders Meeting
- August 25<sup>th</sup>
  - Juntos Facebook Meeting
- August 26<sup>th</sup>
  - Dean's Covid Zoom
- August 27<sup>th</sup>
  - Trempealeau County Committee Meeting
- August 31<sup>st</sup>
  - Project Leader Support Meeting
- September 1<sup>st</sup>
  - 4-H Dilemmas
  - Northern Region Meeting
- September 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - 4-H Movement
- September 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - Area 9 meeting
  - Club Leader Meeting
- September 8<sup>th</sup>
  - Juntos Meeting

- September 9<sup>th</sup>
  - Dean's Covid zoom
  - Plarn Mats meeting
- September 10<sup>th</sup>
  - 4-H Program Zoom