



EXTENSION IMPACT

Improving the Health of Older Adults

Nearly 4 million Wisconsinites are over the age of 50, representing 67% of the population. Wisconsin's older adult population is growing more rapidly than other age groups, and a disproportionate share of aging population growth is in rural areas. Rural populations are more likely to be older, poorer, less healthy, and have fewer local services than urban populations. Rural adults are more likely to delay care due to financial barriers and have a higher mortality rate.

Extension educates older adults to take steps that support health, happiness, and longevity.

In response, Extension is implementing the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) in 37 counties. AMP is an evidence-informed enrichment program developed by the National Council on Aging. Each Aging Mastery Program series entails 10 hours of education, including five to 10 weeks covering physical activity, healthy eating, social connectedness, advance care planning, community engagement, and healthy relationships. Through these activities, we encourage adults to take steps to support health, happiness, and longevity by engaging in education on physical, mental, social, and financial health. As a result, participants spend more time each day doing things that are good for themselves and good for others. This leads to improved health, more robust financial security, enhanced well-being, and increased connectedness to communities.

Since 2020, Extension offered 37 AMPs that reached 441 individuals across the state, and reached 90 AMP graduates for follow-up educational engagement. This programming resulted in behavior changes related to improved sleep, nutrition, physical activity, social connectedness, healthy relationship, community engagements, and advanced care planning in most participants. Participants reported improvements in key areas of aging: physical health, emotional well-being, personal finances, self-efficacy, wellness, engagement, completion of advanced care directives, mental health, and social connectedness.

For example, 100% of participants were able to identify at least one change they made toward better health and well-being due to the program. 90% said that the program helped improve personal finances. 96% of participants said AMP helped with physical health; the same amount reported that it helped with their emotional wellbeing. One participant stated, "I have become more mindful of what I put in my body for nutrition. I have started eating fruit for the first time in my life!" Another participant stated that the program's "physical and mental health routines are helping me to reduce stress and anxiety while nurturing a better approach to relaxation."

Our evaluations also showed that participants made significant improvements in the frequency of social interactions, sources of social support, and civic engagement. For example, 89% of participants stated that the program helped with social/community connections.

since 2020



37

programs offered
statewide



441

individuals
reached



The Life Span program is part of Extension's Human Development & Relationships Institute. Learn more by visiting aging.extension.wisc.edu.



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