



**Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
MONROE COUNTY

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# The Bridge

## PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Hello Everyone!

Here we are again, stepping into a New Year. How the time does fly!  
We will be meeting again as a county Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026. Snow date is Jan. 27th.

So far this December, I think we are going to have a white Christmas. I do enjoy the snow but not the bitter cold. We had a very enjoyable Christmas event on December 2. We were able to have our District and State Cultural Arts person, Sue Grotjahn, join us. She guided us through a craft project. It is amazing how each of our pinwheel craft were alike but different in our color and button choices. We are never too old to learn and create.

During our January meeting we will be planning for our new year of events and projects. If anyone has any ideas or things you want to explore bring them to the meeting or let Bernie or me know. I know the St. Clare Mission will be getting in touch with me early January to make sure we are still willing to provide a bag meal for their volunteers.

Take care! Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!

Jean



**Dec. 2025/  
Jan. 2026**



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**DECEMBER**

**December 19** — Westside HCE Club Bake Sale, 9 a.m. to Noon, Sparta Barney Community Center, 1000 E. Montgomery St., Sparta

**JANUARY**

**January 20, 2026** — Kickoff for 2026, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Perkins Restaurant, 1015 E McCoy Blvd., Tomah, WI (back meeting room). Lunch on your own. Rain date: January 27, 2026 (same agenda).

## Fall Word Search Answers



## MONROE COUNTY HCE INFORMATION

**2025 Executive Board Members**

President: Jean Boak (372-4354)  
Vice President: Louise Buchholz (435-6435)  
Secretary: Sue Baker-Young (633-6457)  
Treasurer: Bernie Arena (272-3371)

**For more information please contact:**

Jean Boak, President at (372-4354)

**Newsletter Deadline**

Information for the HCE newsletter is due by the **20<sup>th</sup>** of the month for the following month's newsletter.

**2025 Educational Program Chairmen**

Cultural Arts: Louise Buchholz (435-6435)  
Family & WI Bookworms: Bernie Arena (272-3371)  
International: Barbara Mueller (372-9077)  
Membership/Marketing: All Members (372-4354)

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## FALL FEST WRAP UP

Fifteen members attended the October 23rd Fall Fest.

We collected 53 new or gently used books for children. Our Silent Auction (which featured a number of wonderful items) netted \$134.

We collected \$17.30 for Pennies for Friendship, and there was \$10 in donations. John Krause of Badgerland EMS Services was our speaker. He and Mike Huber are co-owners of Badgerland EMS Services. The newly formed business provides medical transport in Monroe County and the surrounding area.

Lunch was catered by Virgil and Donita Schmitz.

Thank you to everyone who helped make the Fall Fest a success!

- - Bernie Arena



## HCE DUES FOR 2026 RAISED TO \$15



The Wisconsin Association for Home & Community Education raised the state dues by \$2.00 at its annual business meeting in September.

The Monroe County Association for Home & Community Education voted to raise our county dues from \$10.00 to \$15.00 a year at the Fall Fest held on October 23, 2025.

Please make your check payable to Monroe County HCE and send it to me, Bernie Arena, 4261 Basswood Rd., Sparta, WI 54656. Thank you.

- - Bernie Arena



## WEST DISTRICT MEETING—A HUGE SUCCESS

Monroe County hosted the West District meeting on October 6, 2025, at the Village of Warrens Community Building. More than 50 people were in attendance.

Larry Scheckel gave a great presentation on the Amish in Wisconsin in the morning. Jim Suchanek, from Black River Falls, spoke to the group about growing large pumpkins. He fielded many questions.

Newly elected West District officers were installed. They included Eileen Gottbeheat as West District director; Darlene Schumacher as treasurer; Judy Hunter as Wisconsin Bookworms Chair and Linda Gentry as International Chair.

Trempealeau County invited everyone to the spring district meeting which will be held on April 13, 2026 at the Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Strum, Wisconsin.

Twelve baskets were filled to the brim with goodies and given out for door prizes.

A huge thank you to everyone who donated baskets, items for the baskets, helped set up the afternoon before, cleaned up after the event, helped in the kitchen, did registration and showed up to make this a great event.

-- Bernie Arena



**Fall West District Gathering**

## TOMAH K-M DOETTES

We are fortunate to have the LaGrange Town Hall for our Monroe County and Tomah K-M Doette meeting. We had our Tomah group meetings October 15 and November 12. Our County Fall Fest gathering was October 23 and our Christmas event was December 2. The LaGrange Town Hall has been busy!

At our November meeting we signed Thanksgiving cards to be sent to April, Vicky Kast and Rita Dreier. We get the town hall keys from Rita. We are donating \$25 to AmVets; Marge would be happy. Fall Fest was a successful program. Plans for the upcoming Christmas Event was discussed. Thirty-one items and \$40 was collected for the Tomah food pantry. Jean had pie trivia questions. Over the 2025 year we have collected \$56 Pennies for Friendship!

At our next meeting January 14, we will have a chili dump. Come join us; bring a sample of our chili to add to our concoction.



- - Barbara, Tomah K-M Doettes Secretary

## WESTSIDE HCE



The Westside HCE Club met on Monday, December 1, 2025 at the Sparta Barney Community Center.

The creed was sited. Secretary and Treasurer reports were given.

Final plans were made for the bake sale, which will be held on December 19th. Small prizes will be given to everyone who comes wearing an ugly sweater, as it is National Ugly Christmas Sweater Day.

Bernie showed a copy of the bake sale flyer. She will get more printed.

Alyce Johnson will be the new club President. Kaye Caulum is the new Vice President. Bernie Arena will be the Secretary-Treasurer.

Bernie shared a photo of the family that got the baby boy basket.

Alyce handed out some rhubarb recipes. Kaye had gift bags for everyone which included her homemade vanilla. Bernie had souvenirs for everyone from her vacation. Kaye gave an update on fellow member Sue Dumas, who is contemplating surgery. Members wished Carol Leis a happy 80th birthday.

- - Bernie Arena

## BABY BASKETS DELIVERED TO BABIES & FAMILIES

Our baby boy arrived on Wednesday, November 12, 2025 at 3:31 p.m. “Maxwell Patrick” weighed in at nine pounds and was 21 inches long. Proud parents are Sandi and Brett Stanek of Tomah, Wisconsin. Maxwell has a two-year-old brother, Beau, at home.

“Rose Ruth” was born to Jasmine Pingel and Cole Exmer on December 1, 2025 at 8:11 p.m. She weighed eight pounds and five ounces and was 20 inches long. Rose Ruth is their first child. The family resides in Tomah, Wisconsin. She is named after both of her paternal grandmothers, and has an HCE connection. Ruth Pingel (a former HCE member) is Jasmine’s grandmother. Jasmine’s friend, Elyssa, was with her when I delivered the basket. I couldn’t tell who was more excited about the baby. Jasmine’s parents are Gary and Dawn Pingel of Tomah.

Congratulations to both families. They were both excited to receive the baskets. Thank you for all the beautiful items in the baskets.

- - Bernie Arena

## CHRISTMAS GATHERING PICS



**Susan Grotjahn, the new WAHCE cultural arts chair, came to share a craft at our Christmas gathering. We made Waldorf stars.**



**Mary Cook and all the wonderful treats at the Christmas gathering.**



## INTERNATIONAL UPDATE

Our Director of Wisconsin Nicaragua Partners, Amy Wiza, reported that the ten huge containers that were stalled in port have been successfully delivered to Nicaragua. That frees up the warehouse in Stevens Point. Bernie was able to take the boxes of items we had collected at our summer picnic up to Stevens Point.



- - Barbara, Tomah Club member and International Rep

### A NOTE OF













I wanted to thank all of you for the wonderful Thanksgiving card and Christmas card. It means so much to be appreciated! I am so blessed to be working with a great group of women. - - Vicky

## 10 KEYS TO HAPPIER LIVING

Everyone's path to happiness is different. Based on the latest research, the Action for Happiness staff have identified 10 Keys that tend to make a happier and more fulfilling.

Together they spell GREAT DREAM!

 <p><b>Giving</b> Do kind things for others</p>	 <p><b>Relating</b> Connect with people</p>	 <p><b>Exercising</b> Take care of your body</p>	 <p><b>Awareness</b> Live life mindfully</p>	 <p><b>Trying Out</b> Keep learning new things</p>
 <p><b>Direction</b> Have goals to look forward to</p>	 <p><b>Resilience</b> Find ways to bounce back</p>	 <p><b>Emotions</b> Look for what's good</p>	 <p><b>Acceptance</b> Be comfortable with who you are</p>	 <p><b>Meaning</b> Be part of something bigger</p>

## December Kindness 2025



**ACTION FOR HAPPINESS**

**Happier · Kinder · Together**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
1 Spread kindness and share the December calendar with others	2 Contact someone you can't be with to see how they are	3 Offer to help someone who is facing difficulties at the moment	4 Support a charity, cause or campaign you really care about	5 Give a gift to someone who is homeless or feeling lonely	6 Leave a positive message for someone else to find	7 Give kind comments to as many people as possible today
8 Do something helpful for a friend or family member	9 Notice when you're hard on yourself or others and be kind instead	10 Listen wholeheartedly to others without judging them	11 Buy an extra item and donate it to a local food bank	12 Be generous. Feed someone with food, love or kindness today	13 See how many different people you can smile at today	14 Share a happy memory or inspiring thought with a loved one
15 Say hello to your neighbour and brighten up their day	16 Look for something positive to say to everyone you speak to	17 Give thanks. List the kind things others have done for you	18 Ask for help and let someone else discover the joy of giving	19 Contact someone who may be alone or feeling isolated	20 Help others by giving away something that you don't need	21 Appreciate kindness and thank people who do things for you
22 Congratulate someone for an achievement that may go unnoticed	23 Choose to give or receive the gift of forgiveness	24 Bring joy to others. Share something which made you laugh	25 Treat everyone with kindness today, including yourself!	26 Get outside. Pick up litter or do something kind for nature	27 Call a relative who is far away to say hello and have a chat	28 Be kind to the planet. Eat less meat and use less energy
29 Turn off digital devices and really listen to people	30 Let someone know how much you appreciate them and why	31 Plan some new acts of kindness to do in 2026				

