

Changing With Today

COLUMBIA COUNTY ASSOCIATION FOR HOME AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy March HCE Friends and Members,

It was so wonderful to see so many HCE members at our February leader training! Thank you to Becky for presenting "Who Gets Grandma's Yellow Pie Plate?" I truly enjoyed seeing the "special" items that members brought to share with the group. Our next leader training will be held on Tuesday, March 3 at 1:30 p.m. at the ADRC Building. The topic will be "Meaningful Memories." This presentation was a highlight at last year's HCE State Conference. I will be sharing the educational materials provided by UW Extension to help us learn ways to preserve and keep our memories intact. I hope to see you there!

Columbia County HCE is excited to host an upcoming Rendezvous, and we look forward to welcoming our Southwest District HCE members to Savanna Oaks in Fall River. There is still time to finish your cultural arts projects—or, like some of us, to get them started—so they can be displayed and presented for judging. However, none of this can happen unless you register for both the Cultural Arts Contest and Show and the Rendezvous. I look forward to seeing your creativity on display and sharing a wonderful day together!

March 2026

For the last several weeks, I spent a good amount of time working with Mom (Fern Bessac) organizing information about the history of Marcellon Township for its newly designed website. Mom had completed this research years ago. She gathered photographs from days gone by and carefully compiled the information into a booklet. As I read through it, I realized there was so much I hadn't known. Sometimes, though, history can feel overwhelming when you're simply reading words on a page.

So I started asking my dad about the "Turk Oil Thrashers." These were massive machines! That's when history truly came alive for me—talking to someone that knew this history. Dad explained that only a few individuals owned the oil- or wood-burning threshing machines. Each owner covered a two- to three-mile radius of farms, creating a circuit for the week. Farmers would be notified either through the local newspaper or by word of mouth.

Each farm on the route supplied the oil or wood to run the machine and also provided a meal for the crew. During those times, it was essential for everyone to work together. There was the hard labor of threshing in the fields—often on hot, humid days
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SAVE THE DATE/ UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars:

Mar. 3, "Meaningful Memories," ADRC, 1:30 p.m.

Apr. 1, deadline to register for Rendezvous and Cultural Arts Contest and Show

Apr. 16, Rendezvous/Cultural Arts Contest and Show/Southwest District meeting, Savanna Oaks, Fall River

May 1, Donations to Bookworms, 4-H Youth Encouragement Awards, and Pennies for Friendship due to Carol Beck, Treasurer

View forms, newsletters, and WAHCE information at: <https://wahceinc.org/wahce-counties/>

Facebook group:
Columbia County Home & Community Education

—and then there were the equally demanding meals to prepare in equally hot kitchens. Feeding a crew of workers was no small task.

Everyone had an important role. The women, in particular, found ways to prepare hearty meals for large groups, often without fully understanding the science behind food safety and preservation. Yet through cooperation, resourcefulness, and determination, the work got done together.

HCE began as a way for families to share information and skills that would improve everyday life. It provided education that helped families and communities not just survive, but truly thrive.

In the early years, clubs supported women as they adapted to agricultural challenges such as the boll weevil crisis. Later, during World War II, the focus shifted to conserving resources, stretching supplies, and supporting the war effort at home.

Along the way, HCE also created something just as important—a place for women to build friendships, gain understanding, and volunteer their time and talents to make a meaningful difference in their communities. I also believe that mothers, grandmothers, relatives, and friends played an important role in passing along the knowledge they gained at their local HCE clubs to their children, grandchildren, and future generations.

I know that the lessons my grandmother learned at her Marcellon Homemakers meetings were shared with me. And now, as a Nana, I am passing along what 4-H and HCE taught me to my own grandchildren. To this day, we still use the handwritten “Hershey Kiss Peanut Butter Cookie” recipe that Alma Keith gave us 4-H girls. And can my grandsons and granddaughters ever make great cookies! They also know how to stay safe using the oven, how to clean up afterward, and how to wash their dishes. That’s how knowledge lives on—not just in meetings or booklets, but in kitchens, conversations, and shared experiences from one generation to the next.

Have times changed since the early 1900s? Absolutely! But the core values of HCE have not. In fact, they may be more important now than ever.

Do we still need to:

- Support families and communities so they can thrive?
- Respond to changing needs?
- Apply research-based knowledge?
- Promote social connections?

I sincerely believe the answer to each of these questions is a resounding **YES**.

Every HCE member plays an important role in our community. Just like those who worked together years ago to help one another succeed, it is just as important today that we continue passing on our memories, skills, and support to our families and neighbors.

If you have family members, friends, or anyone who could benefit from HCE, invite them to attend a club meeting or one of our training sessions. Our spirit is our greatest strength. The knowledge we share, the skills we teach, and the meaning HCE brings to our community are truly priceless. Take a moment to think about how you can pass along what you’ve learned. Invite someone new. Share your experiences. Together, we can ensure that the legacy and purpose of HCE continue for generations to come.

I couldn’t possibly end without finishing “Dad’s Story.” He finished by explaining that each farm on the threshing circuit was required to provide a hearty meal for the owner and the threshing crew. The farms were generally visited in the same order, so everyone knew which stops were known for the best meals. And then, with a twinkle in Dad’s eye, he added that the last farmer on the circuit also provided beer for the workers. And as Paul Harvey was famous for saying: “And now you know the rest of the story.”

Co-President, Kim Sweney

Donations Due May 1

Individual members and club members: consider a donation to the Youth Encouragement program, Bookworms, or Pennies for Friendship. Send donations by May 1 to: Carol Beck, CCAHCE Treasurer 5700 Prairie Stone Dr. McFarland, WI 53558

**CULTURAL ARTS AND TEXTILES CONTEST AND SHOW
REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name of club (or indicate *individual*): _____

Send this registration for all entries by April 1 to: Kay MacLeish, N3703 County Rd. U, Merrimac, WI 53561

Please list your entry category(ies) below with a title or brief description. For example:

5—jewelry	5A—bracelet	blue/white beaded bracelet
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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**RENDEZVOUS
REGISTRATION FORM**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Name of club (or indicate *individual*): _____

Send this registration, along with your check (made out to CCAHCE) for \$25*, by April 1 to Carol Beck, CCAHCE Treasurer, 5700 Prairie Stone Dr., McFarland, WI 53558

**Registration fees are transferable, but not refundable. Payments after April 1 must include an additional \$5 fee.*

Food pantry donations will be collected at the registration desk the day of the event.

RENDEZVOUS/CULTURAL ARTS CONTEST AND SHOW/SOUTHWEST DISTRICT SPRING MEETING

Thurs., April 16, 2026

Savanna Oaks Community Center

100 Savanna Rd., Fall River

Registration: Please use the forms in this newsletter to register for Rendezvous and/or the Cultural Arts Contest and Show. Registrations are due April 1.

Cost: \$25 *(registration fees are transferable, but not refundable. Payments after April 1 must include an additional \$5 fee)*

Agenda:

8-9 a.m.—check in cultural arts projects, collection of food pantry donations

9-9:30 a.m.—arrival and morning refreshments

9:30-9:45 a.m.—welcome, pledge, HCE Creed

9:45 a.m.—"Something Special from Wisconsin"***

- ◆ Sarah Hagenow, 78th Alice in Dairyland
- ◆ Christine Lindner, former Alice in Dairyland, Marketing Manager: "Alsum Farms and Produce, Wisconsin Potatoes and YOU"
- ◆ Julie and Elizabeth Schoeneberg, Creek Bed Farmacy: "Agritourism—Growing Opportunities for Our Next Generation"

Noon—lunch (broasted chicken, baby red potatoes, vegetable medley, éclair torte)

Post-lunch to 1:30 p.m.—viewing of cultural arts exhibits (everyone will have an opportunity to vote for a "viewer's choice" award)

1:30 p.m.—Southwest District business meeting

2:30 p.m.—Invitation to Southwest District fall meeting, Prayer Creed, farewell

**We will be hearing from four amazing women ambassadors for agriculture, all of whom have roots here in Columbia County:

Sarah Hagenow, the 78th Alice in Dairyland, will educate us about Wisconsin's incredibly diverse agriculture industry. We'll learn about the economic impact, and some of the crops and commodities that characterize this vibrant community.

Christine Lindner, Marketing Manager, Alsum Farms & Produce, will help us experience the journey of how Alsum potatoes make their way from farm to dinner table. Established more than five decades ago and headquartered in Friesland, Alsum Farms & Produce has been providing quality potatoes, onions and fresh wholesale produce since 1973.

Elizabeth and Julie Schoeneberg are part of Creek Bed Farmacy, a family-owned farm, known for seasonal U-pick fruits like strawberries and peaches, and Wisconsin's largest corn maze (18 acres!) This mother-daughter duo will share the real-world challenges, rewards and strategies behind running a successful agri-tourism operation.