

Waldo County

2024-25 Program Updates

The **2024-2025** program year at the **Waldo County Cooperative Extension Office** has been marked by continued community engagement, collaboration, and innovation. Through a wide range of educational programs and outreach efforts, we've supported residents in areas such as youth development, home gardening, commercial agriculture, food preservation, nutrition, and farm business planning. Our work remains grounded in local needs and is guided by the mission of the **University of Maine Cooperative Extension** to strengthen the health, economy, and resilience of Maine communities. The following updates highlight key accomplishments, new initiatives, and ongoing efforts that have shaped our impact in Waldo County over the past year.



4-H Positive Youth Development



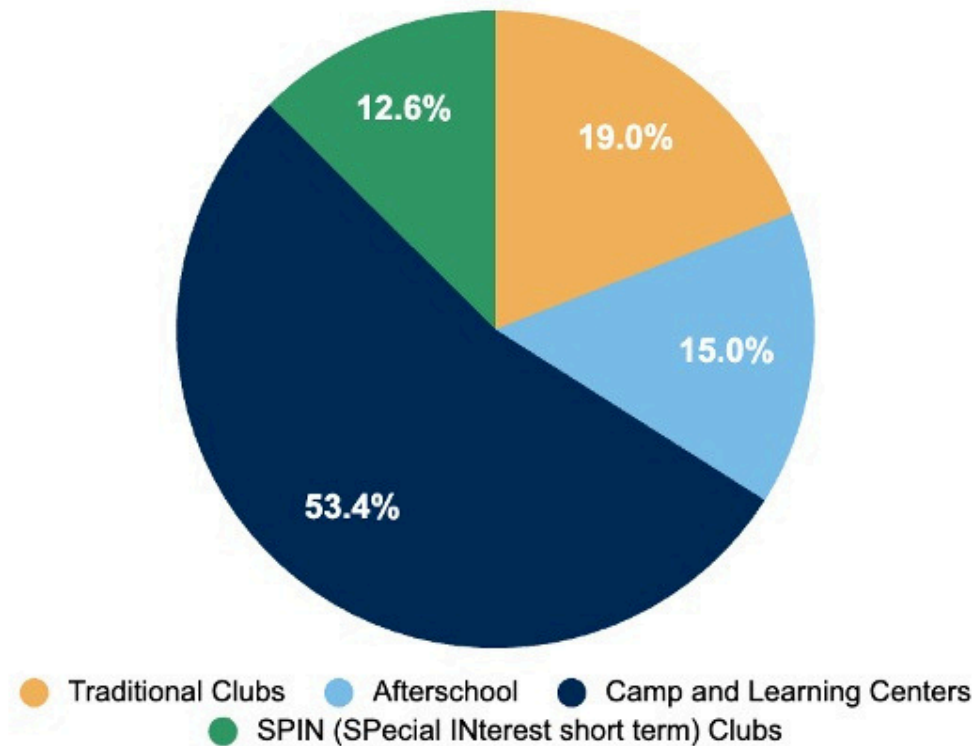
4-H is the **positive youth development program** of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. In 4-H, youth partner with caring adults to explore areas of interest where youth acquire knowledge and skills that will build their confidence and give them the tools to be civic leaders. 4-H provides the flexibility for volunteers to plan activities and projects for youth throughout the county.

There are several ways youth ages 5-18 can participate in 4-H: in school, afterschool programs, traditional clubs, and camps. In 2024, the Maine 4-H program served over **10,000 youth** through a variety of program offerings. Over **3,000 youth** participated in Maine 4-H camp programs, another **2,300 youth** were members of 4-H clubs or afterschool programs, and nearly **900 youth** participated in Maine 4-H's SPIN clubs (SPecial INTERest clubs). In 2024, Maine 4-H had a team of **634 enrolled volunteers** who worked to provide learning opportunities to Maine youth.



4-H Positive Youth Development

2024 Maine 4-H Participants by Program Area

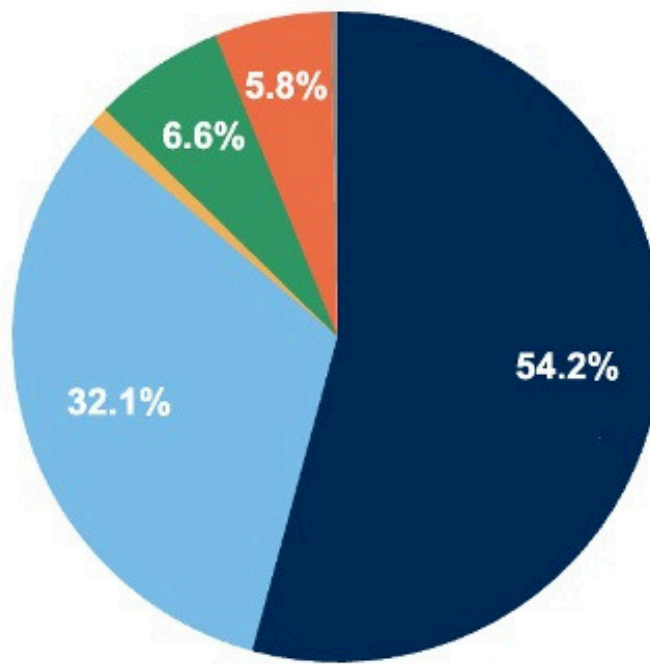


During the 2024 4-H year, Waldo County 4-H engaged more than **1,100 youth**, thanks to the dedication and support of numerous adult volunteers. Youth participated in school enrichment programs, traditional 4-H clubs, special interest clubs, and camping programs. Tanglewood 4-H camp hosted over **380 campers** and served nearly **700 youth** in their in-school programs. Over **150 youth** participated in 4-H through programs offered through the **Waldo County Cooperative Extension office**. Programs included the 4-H Ocean Xplorers, 4-H activities at the United Farmers Market, 4-H craft night, and more. In addition, 4-H members participated in events such as 4-H livestock shows, statewide 4-H trips, and online workshops, and exhibition halls.



4-H Positive Youth Development

Waldo County 4-H Participants By Program Area

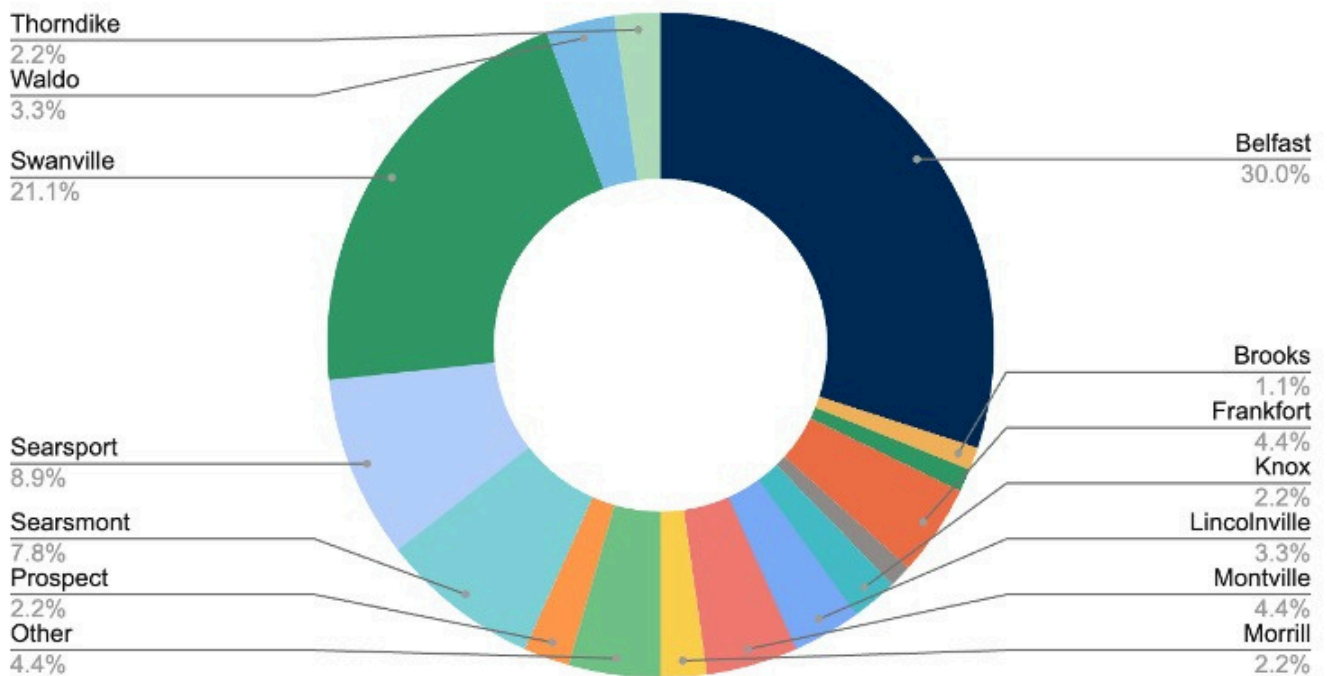


● Open Air Classroom ● Day and Overnight Camp ● Traditional Clubs ● Afterschool
● SPIN (SPECIAL Interest short term) Clubs ● Volunteers



4-H Positive Youth Development

2024 Waldo County 4-H Participants By Town (Not Including Camp Data)



4-H Positive Youth Development

The 4-H Program Explorers

The **4-H Ocean Xplorers** program was offered through a partnership with the **UMaine MARINE Initiative, Waldo County 4-H, and the Belfast Free Library**. Over **70 youth** participated in the program and explored mid-coast Maine's coastline through a series of activities. Topics covered by the monthly program included aquaculture, marine mammals research, aquatic animal biology, ocean colors, and more!

Presenters included numerous researchers from the University of Maine's MARINE Initiative, University Students, Maine 4-H staff, and staff from Maine's Bigelow Laboratory.

Through the Ocean Xplorers program youth were able to connect with Waldo County's coastline, discover new career paths, and learn about the research projects at the University of Maine. The program continued in 2025 with a focus on community science.



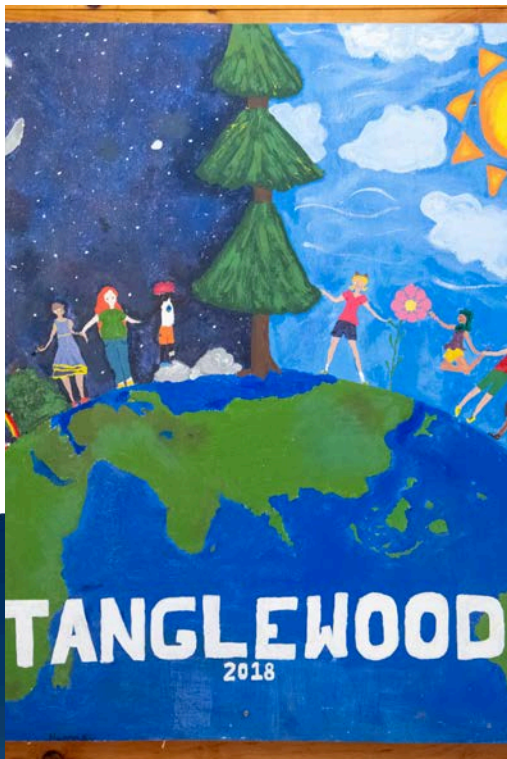
4-H Positive Youth Development

UMaine 4-H and Learning Center at Tanglewood

Tanglewood provides weekly day and overnight camps, discovery trips, and multi-week teen leadership programs. Youth from the greater Belfast area represent the greatest percentage of our summer camp community, with many youths also connected to us during the school year. Forging meaningful ties throughout the year with youth from Waldo County helps us remain a place of positive youth development and experiences.

Total youth served from Waldo County: 167

Total scholarships provided to Waldo County youth: \$21,592.50



4-H Positive Youth Development

Open Air Classroom

We work with many **RSU 71** schools year-round, whether in one-day programs or overnight immersions at Tanglewood or school-based programs at schools. We work with 5th grade students weekly at CASS and Nickerson, building connections before they move to middle school. Long-term partnerships with school principals and teachers allow us to help them best support students, meeting their needs for experiential education and consistent, positive mentorship.

Spring 2024

- Ames Elementary 5th Grade, **34 students**
- Captain Albert Stevens Elementary 5th Grade, **44 students**
- Edna Drinkwater School Grade K, **10 students**
- Troy Howard Middle School 8th Grade, **90 students**

Fall 2024

- Ames Elementary 5th Grade, **28 students**
- Captain Albert Stevens Elementary 5th Grade, **53 students**
- Nickerson Elementary 5th Grade, **17 students**
- Troy Howard Middle School 6-8th Grades, **350 students**
- Weymouth Elementary K-1st, **62 students**



4-H Positive Youth Development

NorthStar 4-H Mentoring at Tanglewood

Piloted in the 2023/2024 school year with **eleven 5th grade students** from Captain Albert Stevens School, NorthStar is now embedded at Troy Howard Middle School, working with **seventeen 6th Grade students**. Modeled after successful programming at Bryant Pond 4-H Learning Center, Tanglewood's NorthStar program works closely with school administration and guidance to reach those youth who are at risk of slipping through the cracks. Meeting monthly during lunch, NorthStar Mentors serve as additional support, connecting with the same group, building social skills, providing opportunities for learning and serving the community, and opening new doors and windows for growth and development.

NorthStar 4-H Mentoring follows a cohort of students from 6th to 12th grade in an ongoing and immersive program model that is shaped, in part, by goals set by the students. The NorthStar 4-H Mentoring model relies heavily on community volunteer support as we strive to strengthen ties between the students, experiential learning opportunities, and positive mentors. Many youth lack access and awareness of the options open to them. By creating opportunities to both gain and give back, students feel more connected and committed to doing well in school and building healthy relationships. It's a win-win for everyone!



Maine Food System

Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The 2023 - 24 **Maine Master Gardener Volunteer training** wrapped up in May 2024. Trainees in county cohorts receive self-paced material on UMaine's learning platform and connect virtually to specialists and industry experts on horticultural topics. Master Gardeners then volunteer in 4 focus areas: Maine Harvest for Hunger, Ecological and Sustainable Landscapes, Youth and School Garden Programs, and Educational Programming.

1. **Maine Harvest for Hunger:** Volunteers grow and donate produce from home and community gardens, glean at farms, and work directly with food security organizations. Program volunteers gleaned over a **quarter of a million** pounds of food for the people of Maine (**258,731 lbs.**) statewide in 2024. The value of that food was over a **half a million dollars (\$509,700)**.

Nearly 4.1 million pounds (4,098,731) were gleaned since the program's inception in 2000.

In **Waldo County**, Master Gardener volunteers helped to harvest, grow or distribute **46,722 lbs. of produce valued at \$92,042 from 58 donor sites** including farms, homesteads home and community gardens which were sent to **80 different organizations** and locations across Waldo County.



Maine Food System

Master Gardener Volunteer Program

cont.

2. Ecological and Sustainable Landscapes: Volunteers learn best sustainable practices utilizing native plants for pollinator and wildlife-friendly habitats, controlling invasive pests, and mitigating climate challenges.

3. Youth and School Garden Programs: Working with teachers and students to explore Maine's food system.

4. Educational Programming: Presenting talks, webinars and writing articles relating to horticulture.

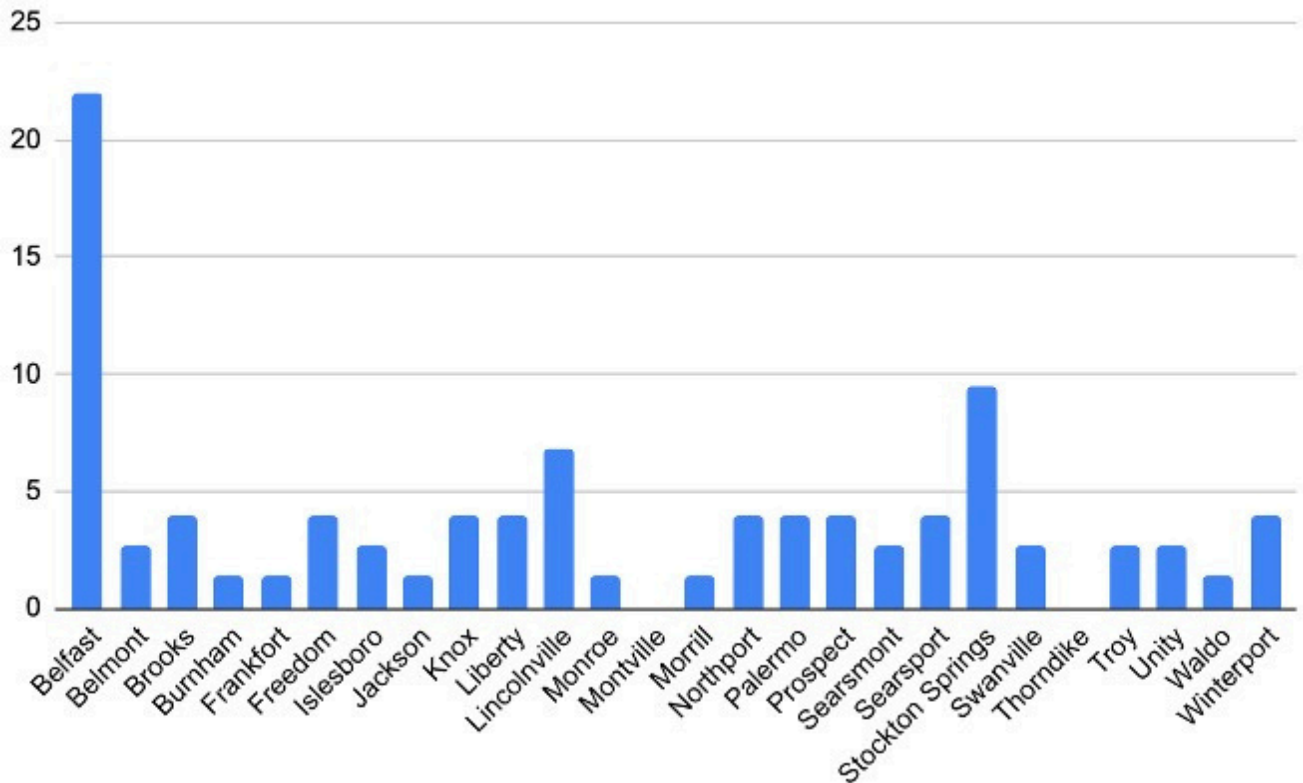
In 2024, **22 people** were enrolled as Master Gardener Volunteers who donated **978 hours** for a total value to Waldo County of **\$29,896** (based on an industry recognized average per hour rate of \$30.54/hr). Programs offered by MGVs and staff reached a total of **245 adult participants** and **200 youth** in 2024.



Maine Food System

Horticulture

Staff fielded **93 questions** from Waldo County residents, a breakdown of the calls per town is presented in the bar graph below. UMaine Extension's state-wide horticulture team offered webinar series and videos featuring sustainable practices for beginning and experienced gardeners which were viewed by **37 Waldo County residents**. Two new programs are now offered: **The Maine Gardener Training**, which does not require a volunteer component and was attended in 2024 by **5 residents** in Waldo County. **The Maine Horticultural Apprentice Training**, a micro-credential program for professionals in the green industry and was attended by **4 Waldo County residents**.



Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

This report provides an overview of the outcomes and community impact of the **Maine Families Home Visiting Program** in Waldo County for the calendar year 2024. Administered by the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, the program continues to deliver high-quality, evidence-based home visiting services to expectant parents and families with children from birth to age three. Our work aligns with Waldo County's priorities of early intervention, public health, family resilience, and effective use of local resources. With the support of state and federal funding, Maine Families continues to serve as a valuable partner in the county's broader efforts to promote community well-being.

Grounded in the Parents as Teachers model, the program promotes optimal child development, strengthens parenting skills, and enhances family well-being to improve long-term outcomes for young children. By engaging families early—often before a child is born—home visitors are able to support healthy birth outcomes, early literacy, safe home environments, and positive parent-child relationships.





Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

The **Maine Families Home Visiting Program in Waldo County** is part of a statewide initiative supported by the **Maine Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** and additional areas of support. The program utilizes the **Parents as Teachers™ model**, which is internationally recognized for its effectiveness in supporting parents as their child's first and most important teacher.

Mission

The mission of Maine Families in Waldo County is to empower parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Through certified Parent Educators, the program provides personalized home visits that focus on:

Maine Families' purpose is to support:

- Healthy and happy families with emotional and physical well-being.
 - Positive and effective parenting.
 - Healthy and strong parent-child attachments.
 - Positive and creative learning environments for children.
 - Self-confidence for both parents and children.
 - Families' access to the resources they need to thrive.
 - Families who are deeply connected to and supported by their communities.
- Building the foundation that children need for educational success.

The program utilizes the Parents as Teachers™ model, an internationally recognized child development framework.



Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

Supporting Families from the Very Beginning

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension Maine Families Home Visiting Program in Waldo County is a no-cost, voluntary program that supports prenatal families and those with newborns and toddlers up to age 3—and in some cases, age 5. As part of a statewide initiative, this program is grounded in the nationally recognized, evidence-based Parents as Teachers (PAT) model. Certified Parent Educators deliver personalized home visits to support **child development, health and nutrition, family well-being, and safe home environments.**

Maine Families believes that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. Our Parent Educators provide **one-on-one guidance** to support caregivers in understanding developmental milestones, celebrating their child's growth, and accessing resources tailored to their family's unique needs. Visits are **flexible** and designed to ensure **consistent support** even when in-person meetings are not possible. Materials and activities are delivered to families in advance to maintain engagement and continuity of services.

Developmental Support from the Start

Developmental screenings begin as early as two months of age using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), helping to identify strengths and areas for support. This early intervention approach empowers families to take action well before a child enters preschool or kindergarten. When delays are identified, Parent Educators work closely with families to offer targeted activities and connect them to early intervention services. These efforts are supported through funding from the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV).



Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

Scope of Work

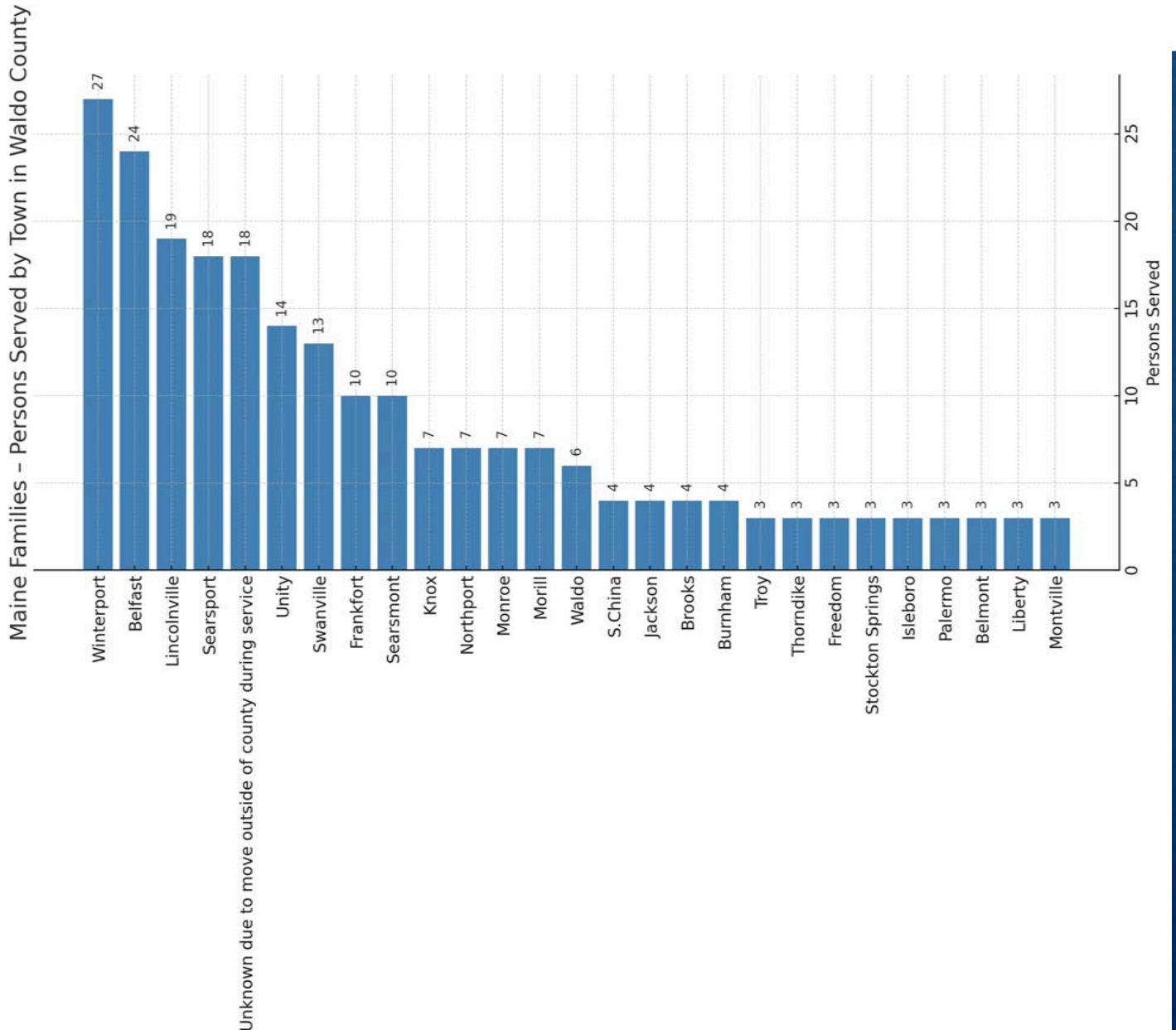
Maine Families has a team of **professionals** who believe all parents want the best for their babies. Our team is well educated and up to date on the latest **research in early childhood education** and **parenting needs**. They have completed **Maine Families Core Knowledge training** and are **certified** through **Parents as Teachers as Parent Educators**. They participate in mandatory professional development training each year, as well as monthly clinical supervision, and weekly reflective supervision meetings. Your Family Visitor will be understanding, nonjudgmental, and compassionate. Maine Families in Waldo County offers:

- Home visits tailored to individual family needs
- Information on topics such as prenatal care, childbirth, newborn, parenting and child development
- Screenings for child development, health, and safety
- Connection to local community resources
- Opportunities to engage with other families through playgroups and workshops

These services are provided at **no cost to families in Waldo County** who are expecting or have recently had a baby.

Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families - Persons served by Town in Waldo County





Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

Commitment to Quality

In 2022, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension earned **national recognition as a Parents as Teachers Blue Ribbon Affiliate**, marking its achievement in delivering exemplary home visiting services. This quality endorsement reflects the program's adherence to evidence-based practices and continuous improvement. Planning is now underway for the next Quality Endorsement and Improvement Process (QEIP) cycle, which begins in July 2025.

Key Outcomes (2024):

- Improved child development through age-appropriate screening and individualized support
- Enhanced school readiness through early learning activities and parental engagement
- Reduced risk factors associated with child maltreatment, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and family isolation
- Increased access to services including mental health support, nutrition, housing, and early intervention

In the 2024 program year in Waldo County:

- 70 families were served
- 73 children were served
- Home visits: 715
- Group Connections: 20 (13 for enrolled families, 7 for community members)
- 95% of families received a family assessment
- 93% of families completed at least 1 goal
- 89% of families that enrolled were connected to resources in the community
- 95% of enrolled children received a complete health screen
- 90% of children received a complete developmental screening
- School Readiness: 100% of children received early literacy support and activities.

Sustainable Economic and Community Development

Maine Families in Waldo County

- Safety Screenings and Education
 - Period of Purple Education: 100%
 - Safe Sleep Education: 100%
 - Home Safety: 81%
 - Healthy Relationship: 100%
 - Behavioral Risk Assessments: 88%
- Perinatal Mental Health Screening: 97% of eligible parents
- Community Referrals Made: 152
- Contacts with Non-Enrolled Community Members: 372
- Lactation: 67% who initiated lactation continued breastfeeding past 3 months of age

Parent Voice:

"I had Maine Families with my first child. When I was pregnant with my second child I started again. With this pregnancy I felt differently and knew my mental health was struggling. My visitor did a questionnaire with me and talked about mental health during pregnancy. She helped me to learn about caring for myself, what to look for and let me know that I wasn't an awful person because I was struggling. After my daughter was born, my visitor would ask how I was doing and how counseling was going at every visit without judging me. I don't know what my life would have been like without that support"

— Waldo County Parent



Agriculture and Natural Resources

Waldo County Agriculture and Farm Business Program

According to the 2022 Ag Census, **Waldo County** has **469 farms** in operation, which collectively manage **54,547 acres** of farmland. During 2024, UMaine Cooperative Extension supported commercial producers in Waldo County through one-on-one consultation addressing a variety of topics including: **pest identification, disease diagnosis, integrated pest management, soil testing, site suitability for farm production, soil nutrient management, pasture management, livestock and dairy production, vegetable and row crop production, small fruit and tree fruit production, veterinary diagnostic testing, financial coaching and business planning.**



Agriculture and Natural Resources

Program Highlights

In 2024-2025, local in-person program events accessed by Waldo County residents included: a workshop titled **Introduction to the Business of Livestock Production** delivered at our office in Waldo, a workshop titled **How to Prune Mature Apple Trees** in Rockport, a **Farm Tractor Safety Course** in Swanville, **Pasture Walk Event** in Searsmont, the **1st Annual Midcoast Agroforestry Conference** in Lincolnville, a series of **Growing and Marketing Specialty Potato Varieties workshops** and the **Specialty Potato Variety Showcase** at the **MOFGA** fairgrounds in Unity.



Agriculture and Natural Resources

Growing and Marketing Specialty Potato Varieties

In 2024 and 2025, Johnson conducted specialty potato variety trials at the **Rogers Farm Forage and Crop Research Facility** in Stillwater generating information on yield and other traits related to performance for 15 potato varieties suitable for specialty markets. Results were shared through a **comprehensive** Extension program that included a series of **workshops, variety showcases, and on-farm field day events** held in and around **Waldo County**. Outcomes of the program to date include a reported increase in knowledge of specialty potato production through attending program events among 100% of attendees surveyed. A majority of respondents reported that they now intended to adopt a new practice on their farm as a result of attending the program. Post-program event surveys (n=6) report a combined expected increase in **farm income** through adoption of new growing and marketing practices of at least **\$73,000** over the next **5** years.





Agriculture and Natural Resources

Business Planning for Producers

The 2024-2025, Business Planning for Producers cohort included **20 aspiring, new and beginning farmers including 4 participants from Waldo County.** Since 2023, 8 new and beginning farmers in Waldo County have participated in this introductory business planning course, with **50%** completing a business plan and qualifying for USDA Farm Service Agency borrowers training credit.

Commercial producers or those interested in starting a farm business in Maine can contact Assistant Extension Professor, Sustainable Agriculture and Farm Business Management Educator, **Brett Johnson** by phone or email at 207.342.5971 or brett.w.johnson@maine.edu.





extension.umaine.edu/waldo

Waldo County Cooperative Extension

1992 Waterville Rd. Waldo ME 04915-3117

extension.waldo@maine.edu

In complying with the letter and spirit of applicable laws and pursuing its own goals of diversity, the University of Maine System does not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, gender, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, national origin, citizenship status, familial status, ancestry, age, disability physical or mental, genetic information, or veterans or military status in employment, education, and all other programs and activities. The University provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with disabilities upon request. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies: Director of Equal Opportunity, 5713 Chadbourne Hall, Room 412, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-5713, 207.581.1226, TTY 711 (Maine Relay System).