

# UW-Stout: Graduate student Prokosch supporting children, futures at Boys & Girls Club

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Menomonie, Wis. — When she graduates in spring 2023 with a master's in [school counseling](#) from University of Wisconsin-Stout, Tana Prokosch already will have multiple professional experiences working with children.

In addition to two program-required field experiences scheduled during the 2022-23 academic year at area schools, including a full-time internship in the spring, she will have benefited from more than three years of full time experience at the Boys & Girls Club in Menomonie.

Since November 2019, she has been a full time program coordinator and since October 2021 the interim director and program coordinator at the club, which is at River Heights Elementary school.

The experience has given her a chance to put into practice some of the skills she has learned in the classroom. "One of the biggest things I have learned in the counseling program is how to be a better advocate for students. All students should have the opportunity to succeed," Prokosch said.

Plus, Prokosch isn't just helping children succeed, she's helping the club grow. Recently, the club held a breakfast event at UW-Stout's Memorial Student Center to highlight its efforts to expand services from elementary to middle school students in the city.

The Menomonie club is part of the [Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley](#), which includes clubs in Eau Claire, Altoona, Chippewa Falls and Black River

Falls. Menomonie is the fastest-growing of the five locations.

The club recently received an \$80,000 grant, renewable for up to five years, from the state Department of Public Instruction to expand in Menomonie. However, another \$160,000 must be raised to meet all expansion needs, said Ann Kaiser, CEO.

Learn more at the club's [Capital Campaign webpage](#).

Families pay a fee for children to attend, and 25% to 30% of children receive financial support.

"We know there are families that appreciate the resource and know their kids are at a safe space," Kaiser said. "We know that clubs work."

About 50 students attend the Menomonie club daily during the school year and in the summer. Programming helps children develop a healthy lifestyle and builds character, said Angela Payne, director of resource development and a 2004 UW-Stout graduate in [hotel, restaurant and tourism management](#).

"These are the future leaders of Menomonie," she said.

School officials are seeing a greater need to help children with social and emotional issues, something the club can provide. "Kids need different outlets in addition to sports," said John Samb, the school district director of academic support and a high school assistant principal.

Chancellor Katherine Frank is a board member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Greater Chippewa Valley. She supports the effort to provide middle school programming at the Menomonie facility.

"Middle school is when futures are shaped. It's critical to the development of an individual. There's a transformational power of being a club member," she told the breakfast gathering.

She drew a parallel between UW-Stout and the Boys & Girls Club. The mission of both is providing access and ensuring that every student has quality programming and an equitable space for success.

"We are a dedicated partner to helping the Boys & Girls Club achieve even greater

success,” Frank said. “We are both in the business of seeing students succeed all the way along the pipeline of learning.”

### **Providing support for children**

Prokosch, a native of Pepin, graduated from UW-Eau Claire in psychology in 2018 and started the master’s program at UW-Stout in 2020.

She first became involved with the club while at UW-Eau Claire, realizing then that she wanted to work with children. With her additional experiences at the club in Menomonie, she hopes to work as a counselor in an elementary school when she finishes her master’s.

“Research has shown that having a consistent role model is missing from a lot of kids’ lives,” Prokosch said. “We do our best to give one-on-one attention at the club.”

She enjoys the flexibility at the club to be creative with programming. Children have daily academic lessons and discuss a variety of topics, such as diversity.

“We talk about how we include everybody at the club. It’s a unique situation to have those conversations and rewarding to see kids open up,” Prokosch said. “It’s been eye-opening for me and great to support the kids. I’ve had kids tell me their life story because they feel safe enough in our space to do so.”

UW-Stout’s school counseling program has helped Prokosch develop higher quality programming at the club through exposure to new tools and resources and helped her improve her communication skills with children.

“In addition, it has helped me learn how to remove barriers to students’ success. It has really allowed me to help kids recognize their strengths and challenges,” she said.

“I am all about supporting kids, but I want to teach them the skills they need to succeed on their own,” she added.

Prokosch also has helped mentor other UW-Stout school counseling graduate students who have worked and volunteered at the club.