COUNTY OF PORTAGE
WISCONSIN

ERIC OLSON
COUNTY EXECUTIVE

For Immediate Release

Portage County Executive Office
CountyExecutive@co.portage.wi.gov
(715) 346-1997

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Portage County partners with AmeriCorps and Marshfield Clinic to advance community sustainability and forest health

County Executive Eric Olson recently brought on board two AmeriCorps members to serve Portage County alongside county staff. The members are full-time students at UWSP who serve part-time for the County Executive office to develop projects and plan community outreach events. Their service is facilitated by the Community Health Corps program at Marshfield Clinic - Sanford Health.

Ellen Klug is helping to update older energy studies of Portage County buildings. Prior AmeriCorps members worked on county energy planning from 2010 to 2013 through a project directed by County Executive Patty Dreier. Klug is also conducting community outreach and collaboration around sustainability issues with local governments, businesses, and non-profits. She is originally from Random Lake, WI, and moved to Portage County for school in 2023. Her major at UWSP is Environmental Science and Resource management.

Samuel Varsho is a native of Wisconsin Rapids. He has lived in Stevens Point for about three years and is majoring in both Forest Management and Philosophy. He will work to improve Portage County's forest health by compiling existing forest management plans and exploring what resources the Wisconsin DNR could provide to Portage County and landowners. Sam is also organizing events for spring to include tree planting and hands-on workshops covering tree disease prevention and invasive species control.

"There are many opportunities for Portage County to take a leadership role when it comes to the environment," said County Executive Olson. "Students like Sam and Ellen recognize the urgency of making real progress around energy conservation and ecological health, and their creativity and enthusiasm is contagious. We will be sharing results and engaging volunteers in projects this coming spring to demonstrate how everyone can play a role in making our world a better place."

These positions are funded primarily through AmeriCorps, Serve Wisconsin, and Marshfield Clinic-Sanford Health. Local match for their positions is funded from salary savings within the Office of the County Executive. Varsho and Klug receive a modest living stipend in exchange for their service and are eligible for a $3700 education award when their term completes in Early June. AmeriCorps is a federal agency dedicated to national service and volunteerism. Its mission is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement.