

EXTENSION
IN ACTION

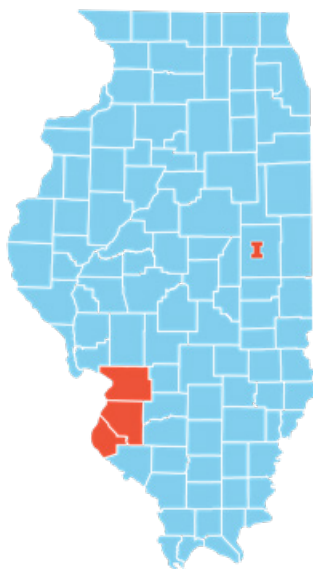
Serving Madison, Monroe
and St. Clair Counties

ILLINOIS EXTENSION 2023





William Catalano
County Director



Extension Connections

At University of Illinois Extension, our mission as a land-grant university is our road map for the everyday actions we make. We have been given the responsibility not to simply lead in society-changing research but to spread that knowledge across the State of Illinois for the benefit of the individual and their community. As overwhelming as it may sound, this happens daily at Extension.

The remarkable impact of Extension continues to be seen and felt in our communities and homes, created by the engagement between Extension staff, partners, stakeholders, and volunteers. For over a century, we have been unrelenting in our pursuit to achieve the mission of Extension. Extension's impact and service crosses virtually every boundary: social, economic, political, racial, ethnic, and on.

The relevance and pursuit of the mission are lasting because the need for Extension is greater than ever. To meet the grand challenges we

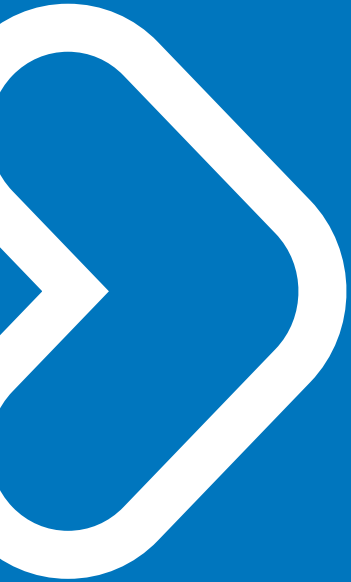
face, Extension must be dynamic and able to adapt as fast as the forces in our communities change and shift. Information and education alter the decisions of individuals, businesses, organizations, and communities. Extension connects all these groups to that information and with that information.

This report is a celebration of the people who made it all happen. Too numerous to list and too tremendous to capture in words, I will simply write, "Thank You."

As you look through this annual report, I ask that you recognize that every bullet point, statistic, picture — all of this content is evidence of lives changed — lives made better.

Sincerely and with gratitude,

William Catalano
Extension County Director
Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair Counties



Illinois Extension Makes an Impact

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land-grant mission thrives each day through Extension's programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff that are responsive to five grand challenge themes:



Community:
Support Strong and Resilient Residents



Economy:
Grow a Prosperous Economy



Environment:
Sustain Natural Resources at Home and in Public Spaces



Food:
Maintain a Safe and Accessible Food Supply



Health:
Maximize Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health

2023 Engagement

Extension leaders, staff, and stakeholders define priorities that create meaningful, mission-centered outcomes throughout the state:

657
Communities Served

745K+
Program Attendees

12.7M+
Webpage Views

58.5M+
Social Media
Impressions

1.8M+
YouTube Views

555
Educational
Sessions/Week
(28K+ Annually)

90
Online Courses
Accessed by
12K+ People

10,158
Local Government
Education
Webinar Reach

1,799
4-H Clubs

199,400
4-H Experiences

Partnerships

5,682
Program
Volunteers

274
Community
Gardens

2,634
School and
Community
Partners

Resource Generation

\$15,259,785
Value of Volunteer
Contributions

\$463,368
Value of Donated
Produce Grown or
Facilitated

\$4M+
External Funds
Secured for
SNAP-Ed Partners



4-H Federation Officers President Erin Halleran, Vice President Janella Neary, Secretary Bridgette Yearian, Treasurer Cohen Brandt, and Reporter Taryn Gregson with 4-H Youth Development Educator Emily Reece and Nutrition and Wellness Educator Kris Juelfs attend the proclamation signing ceremony.



Monroe County 4-H Federation

The dynamic teens of the Monroe County 4-H Federation play a crucial role in organizing and leading various 4-H workshops and fundraising events in the heart of Monroe County. Their recent endeavor involved taking on a community service project. They painted tables at the Fine Arts building at the Fairgrounds, a symbol of gratitude to the Fair Association for their unwavering support. The 4-H Federation Officers President Erin Halleran, Vice President Janella Neary, Secretary Bridgette Yearian, Treasurer Cohen Brandt, and Reporter Taryn Gregson also recently attended a proclamation signing ceremony with the county board members, announcing 4-H week in Monroe County. In addition, they orchestrated a “4-H for the Holidays” event, offering an array of engaging games and creative crafts. The event provided youth with an enjoyable outlet while affording parents the opportunity to finalize their holiday arrangements with ease. Their efforts showcase their commitment to service, igniting change and community spirit.

Monroe County 4-H Teens as Teachers

Education lies at the core of the Monroe County 4-H Teen Teachers’ mission. Armed with knowledge and passion, they are trained to teach a series of lessons and have empowered over 250 young minds through engaging ag in classroom lessons. Their impact extends beyond the classroom as they offer educational tours of the Monroe County Fair to local daycares, fostering a love for learning in every corner of the community. Committed to their cause, the 4-H teen teachers are required to complete a minimum of eight hours of ongoing training and volunteer work, embodying the spirit of service and lifelong learning.

St. Clair County 4-H Ambassadors

The St. Clair County 4-H Ambassadors shine as beacons of youth advocacy and engagement. With zeal and enthusiasm, they champion the local 4-H program, amplifying youth voices and spreading the message of opportunity and growth. Their involvement in initiatives like promoting the Paper Clover Campaign at Tractor Supply Co. in Belleville, as well as the St. Clair County 4-H Program at the Fall Fest held at the Downtown Belleville Kern Center YMCA, underscores their dedication to community outreach and promotion. Offering their support as Teen Superintendents at the St. Clair County 4-H Show-A-Rama, they exemplify leadership and excellence, leaving an indelible mark on the 4-H legacy.



Teen teachers taught agriculture lessons to preschool students.



Alex, Faith, Jack, and Jeremy promoted the St. Clair County 4-H program at Fall Fest at the Downtown Belleville Kern Center YMCA.

4-H continues to show resilience with:



936
4-H Club Memberships



72
4-H clubs



792
4-H unique members



2,326
Fair exhibits



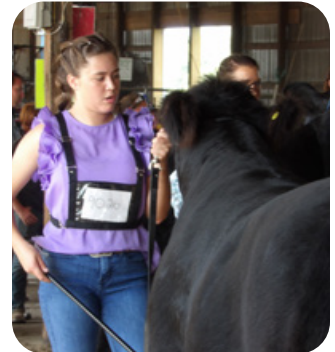
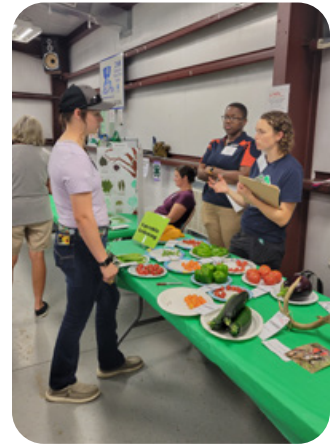
6,428
4-H affiliations (4-H experiences)



89
4-H unique adult volunteers



Showcasing talent, creativity, and community spirit- 4-H youth skins at the 4-H fair and show





MONROE COUNTY 4-H YOUTH CULTIVATE LIFELONG SEWING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE 4-H AND HCE INITIATIVE

Monroe County 4-H collaborated with Monroe County Home and Community Education members in the spring to empower youth with enduring sewing skills. From March to June, nine participants engaged in bi-monthly sessions with HCE members at the Monroe County Annex. The group learned how to hand-sew, identify and use sewing tools and sewing machines, and how to measure and cut patterns. Crafting pincushions, eye masks, pillows, bags, and more, the group not only honed their sewing abilities but also forged lasting friendships.



HCE member helps 4-H youth with using a sewing machine.



4-H youth with their livestock.

HAMEL COOPERATIVE GRAIN CO. AND PURINA ANIMAL NUTRITION HOST LIVESTOCK SHOW CLINIC FOR 4-H YOUTH

Hamel Cooperative Grain Co. and Purina Animal Nutrition hosted a Livestock Show Clinic, which drew approximately 40 4-H members. The youth gained knowledge about nutrition and animal care, along with showmanship techniques.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION AND MADISON COUNTY CAREE HOST OUTDOOR ADVENTURES CAMP AT WILLOUGHBY FARM

University of Illinois Extension hosted a week-long Outdoor Adventures Camp at Willoughby Farm in Collinsville, providing eight campers with a transformative experience. Co-sponsored by Madison County CAREE, the camp aimed to educate children about the environment and outdoor resources. Throughout the week, youth delved into topics such as mammals, pollinators, trees, and safety, while also embarking on daily hikes. The culmination of the week featured an exciting field trip to Treehouse Wildlife Center Inc. in Dow and Pere Marquette in Grafton, providing campers with hands-on learning experiences beyond the campgrounds.



4-H youth engaging in camp activities at Willoughby Farm.



Janella Neary at the 2023 National 4-H Congress.

JANELLA NEARY REPRESENTS ILLINOIS 4-H AS A DELEGATE AT THE 2023 NATIONAL 4-H CONGRESS

Janella Neary represented Illinois 4-H as a delegate at the 2023 National 4-H Congress in Atlanta, GA. During her participation, Janella engaged in various novel experiences, including networking with individuals from across the United States and Puerto Rico. Among the highlights of her Congress experience were the Morning of Service and the Congress Dance. She particularly relished the Morning of Service for its structured approach toward identifying and addressing a problem, followed by its effective implementation. Additionally, the Congress Dance provided Janella with an opportunity to forge new connections and enjoy herself amidst the festivities.





Carol Gardner receives State Outstanding Master Gardener Award.



Area Master Gardener recognized with state-level award

Carol Gardner earned an Outstanding State Master Gardener Award at the Illinois Master Gardener State Conference. This accolade acknowledges volunteers who demonstrate exceptional dedication and engagement in the program. Annually, only 1% to 2% of active Master Gardeners receive this recognition. Gardner undertook Master Gardener training in 2013 and has dedicated over 1,800 volunteer hours to supporting the Madison County Master Gardener program. Her contributions extend to her work at The Gardens at SIUE and The Benjamin Stephenson House.

The Gardens at SIUE features a Shakespeare garden with plants mentioned in William Shakespeare's writings.

Master Naturalist Ned Siegl discovers rare bee species in Belleville

Master Naturalist volunteers play a crucial role in gathering observations and data from their local environments. Among these volunteers, Ned Siegl stands out for his significant scientific contribution. While participating in the citizen scientist project Shutterbee, Siegl stumbled upon an extraordinary discovery in his Belleville backyard.

During his routine photography of bees, Siegl captured an image of a rare species known as the Lemon Cuckoo Bumble Bee (*Bombus citrinus*). This finding sent ripples through the scientific community, as historical records indicated the last confirmed sighting of this bee in the St. Louis region dated back to 1854.

The confirmation of the Lemon Cuckoo Bumble Bee's presence offers a glimmer of hope for researchers, presenting a rare opportunity to gain insights into a native bee species believed to have disappeared from the local environment. Siegl's photograph serves as concrete evidence, providing a window into the mysterious realm of these elusive pollinators.



The Lemon Cuckoo Bumble Bee, *Bombus citrinus*, nectaring on a purple Coneflower. Photo credit: Ned Siegl

NREE Program Impact



453 clients

Hotline & Expert Assistance



27,000 lbs

Community garden donations



43

Number of Educational Programs



7

Radio interviews



1,539

Program participants



25

Media Releases & Articles



Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists planting trees in the woodland area of The Gardens at SIUE



AAA Magazine recognizes The Gardens at SIUE among the top botanical gardens to explore

The Gardens at SIUE stood out prominently in AAA Magazine's April 2023 edition, being the sole Illinois representative among the "10 Beautiful Botanical Gardens to Explore" in the Midwest and the South. Spearheaded by dedicated Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists, the 36-acre garden boasts a meticulously manicured landscape and abundant natural expanses awaiting exploration. In addition to nurturing the garden, these volunteers conduct a variety of enriching educational workshops year-round, further enhancing the community's connection to nature and horticultural knowledge.



Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs cultivate community knowledge through educational workshops

The mission of the Master Gardener and Master Naturalist programs is to share knowledge with others. Throughout the year, dedicated volunteers actively engaged in hosting numerous educational workshops tailored for homeowners. These workshops covered essential topics such as the integration of native plants into landscaping, innovative container design techniques, tree care practices, and the identification of invasive species. Through these efforts, the programs not only empower homeowners with valuable insights but also contribute significantly to environmental stewardship and sustainable living practices within the community.



Master Gardeners from the Gardens at Godfrey Village Hall with their sweet potato harvest that was donated to Crisis Food Pantry in Alton.

Extension-supported gardens cultivate unity and abundance: Addressing food insecurity in Illinois

Accessing fresh, high-quality produce poses a significant challenge for numerous local families. However, Extension-supported gardens actively grew and contributed fresh produce to local food pantries. This initiative greatly benefited residents in Alton, Belleville, Cahokia, Collinsville, Edwardsville, Fairmont City, Glen Carbon, Maryville, Millstadt, and O'Fallon, providing them with over 27,000 pounds of nutritious food. In the face of adversity, these gardens stand as symbols of resilience and unity, demonstrating the power of collective action in addressing food insecurity. Through these efforts, they have not only provided sustenance but have also nourished the bonds of community, reminding us of the profound impact we can make when we come together for a common cause.



Empowering young explorers: Atkins' Acres Educational Farm serves as a pilot for the Junior Master Naturalist program

Atkins' Acres Educational Farm in Millstadt spearheaded the inaugural implementation of the Junior Master Naturalist program, serving as a pioneering platform for young minds to thrive. Over the course of six immersive sessions, a group of nine elementary-aged participants embarked on a journey of discovery, exploring a diverse array of topics ranging from habitat exploration to geology, ornithology, pollinators, climate studies, and beyond.



Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists



121

Master Gardener
Volunteers



8,222

Master Gardener
Volunteer Hours



48

Master Naturalist
Volunteers



4,512

Master Naturalist
Volunteer Hours



Extension Commercial Agriculture Educator Nathan Johanning discusses termination timeline of cover crops at Cover Crop Field Day.



Cover Crop Field Day empowers agricultural professionals for sustainable farming practices

Nathan Johanning, a commercial agriculture educator with University of Illinois Extension, spearheaded a Cover Crop Field Day at the SIU Belleville Research Center. This collaborative effort involved Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Precision Conservation Management, and the Illinois Soybean Association. The event featured discussions on various topics such as Cereal Rye Termination Timing in Soybeans, Trials with Cover Crop Planting Date and Seeding Rates, Cover Crop and Nitrogen Management in Corn Cropping Systems, Practical Soybean Management with Cover Crops, and Opportunities to use Precision Conservation Management Programs and Data on Farming. More than 60 attendees engaged in the program, receiving insights from cover crop experts and participating in research trial tours.

Cover crops stand out as a crucial conservation practice for enhancing soil health and environmental sustainability. Events like this offer farmers and agricultural professionals invaluable hands-on, in-field experiences essential for making informed management decisions for their farms or those under their guidance.



Johanning discusses trials with cover crop planting date.



A drone used to spread cover crop seeds.

Agriculture and Natural Resources Programming



7243
Program Attendance



5972
Participants



211
Educational Sessions



821
Expert Consultations



HSS clients proudly display their cooking skills certificates earned upon completing a 6-week culinary workshop.



Empowering independence through cooking with Monroe County Human Support Services

Nutrition and Wellness Educator Kris Juelfs continues the partnership with Monroe County Human Support Services to offer two dynamic 6-week cooking skill workshops in the spring and fall. HSS helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities pursue their potential and live their best lives. Catering specifically to HSS clients, the workshops aim to equip essential culinary skills, fostering independence and confidence in the kitchen.

Throughout the workshops, participants delved into fundamental aspects of cooking, from practicing food safety protocols to mastering the art of following recipes and utilizing kitchen utensils and equipment efficiently and safely. Participants prepared a variety of recipes, including fruit smoothies, blueberry pancakes, breakfast wraps, and mini pizzas, which were cooked using the air fryer.

With the aid of visual recipes and verbal prompts, participants successfully completed cooking tasks independently, further bolstering their culinary proficiency. As a fitting conclusion to the year's workshops, participants extended a warm invitation to fellow HSS clients to partake in a festive holiday workshop. Nine participants seized the opportunity to join in the holiday cheer, crafting treats such as homemade hot cocoa mix packaged in mason jars as gifts, reindeer crunch snack mix, and Grinch fruit kabobs.

Upcoming initiatives with HSS involve educating clients about gardening techniques and providing hands-on training sessions facilitated by our skilled Master Gardeners, nurturing an approach to wellness and empowerment within the community.



Youth learning where germs occur on their hands through the interactive use of a Glo Germ machine.



Clean Hands, Healthy Bodies program educates youth through handwashing education program

Proper handwashing is a crucial measure to prevent the spread of illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that schools actively teach and reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to maintain the health of both staff and students. Nutrition and Wellness Educator and Registered Dietitian Kris Juelfs actively visited 30 classrooms, delivering an interactive educational program to nearly 750 second and third grade students. The program emphasized the importance of handwashing, detailed the proper steps for effective handwashing, and highlighted key times when hand hygiene is essential.

The Clean Hands Healthy Bodies Program, developed in partnership with Illinois Water and the Monroe County Health Department, brought this vital initiative to fruition. In a survey conducted among teachers, all respondents who represented a 36% response rate affirmed that the program added significant value to their classrooms. One teacher shared, "My students love to see the reveal of where the germs remain on their hands. I think that is quite an eye-opener since they cannot see this with their naked eye."

Future plans for the program include expansion into Madison and St. Clair counties in 2024. Additionally, there are intentions to further enrich nutrition education by introducing programming into second grade classrooms at Rogers Elementary School in Waterloo.



HCE leader with Monroe County Farm Bureau leader and Nutrition and Wellness Educator Kris Juelfs



Empowering adults to lead healthier lifestyles in Illinois

In Illinois, 33% of adults suffer from obesity, while 24% report engaging in no daily physical activity outside of work. Obesity increases the risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of Cancer. However, Illinois Extension Nutrition and Wellness Educator and Registered Dietitian Kris Juelfs is committed to making a tangible difference in her community.

Kris took the stage at the 2023 Illinois Annual Home Community Education State Conference to share her insights into nutrition and healthy cooking. She discussed crafting nutritious and delightful dishes using air fryers, covering everything from the different types of air fryers to cooking tips, along with a range of healthy and flavorful recipes. Additionally, Kris conducted live cooking demonstrations, showcasing the versatility and ease of air fryer cooking.

However, Kris's impact extends further as she continues to champion health and wellness initiatives in the local community through the Wellness Wednesday program. The Wellness Wednesday initiative equips adults in the community to lead healthier lives by simplifying research-based information and tailoring it to individuals. In this monthly program, Kris Juelfs covered topics including heart health, making informed dietary choices for healthy aging, enhancing cognitive function, understanding diet trends, and crafting nutritious holiday charcuterie boards. Each session featured 60-minute interactive audio/visual presentations and recipe demonstrations, engaging over 50 participants. Janet Ellsworth, who signed up for the fall class, expressed gratitude for the shared knowledge and praised the consistently exceptional teaching. The program will offer both in-person and virtual sessions throughout 2024.



Participants make salsa using tomatoes, avocados, and lemon in one of the Wellness Wednesday sessions.



Students in Youth Cooking School class learning how to use knives by slicing fruit.

Youth Cooking School boosts cooking skills and healthy choices

Home cooking trends show that people are spending less time preparing and consuming meals at home. Even though most of our daily energy comes from home-cooked food, just over half of individuals cook on any given day. To counter this, the Youth Cooking School program in Madison, Monroe, and St. Clair counties is making a significant impact.

In 2023, the program reached 153 youths, teaching them vital skills in food safety, nutrition, and basic cooking. Additionally, The Food Challenge, tailored for youths aged 11-15 with cooking experience, engaged 26 participants. Collaborating with local organizations such as the Monroe County Home and Community Education Group, Monroe County Pork Producers, Monroe County Farm Bureau, Immanuel Lutheran Church, St. Paul Lutheran Church, St. James Catholic School, and Madison County Farm Bureau, the program ensured success and broad community engagement.

Survey results showed a remarkable increase in knowledge after attending the program. Before Youth Cooking School, only 37% felt confident in food safety; after, this rose to an impressive 92%. Similarly, understanding of healthy food choices jumped from 42% to 84%.

Notably, many students expressed intentions to cook more and opt for healthier options after completing the program, highlighting its effectiveness in promoting positive behavior change.

Nutrition and Wellness Program Reach



1,704
Participants

112
Sessions

193
Hours





RISE UP SUMMER PROGRAM INTEGRATES COOKING AND NUTRITION EDUCATION FOR YOUTH SUCCESS

This past summer, through the RISE UP program, Ms. Peebles, a dedicated community outreach worker with the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, guided 28 teenagers through a transformative journey. While these teens usually dedicate their summers to mastering trades, soft skills, and entrepreneurship, this year, they embraced an additional dimension: resource management, cooking, and nutrition education, all made possible by EFNEP. The enthusiasm ignited among these teens didn't stop within the confines of the program. Through their passionate testimonials and shared experiences, they sparked interest among others in the community. As a result, Ms. Peebles found herself leading a new EFNEP cohort consisting of male adults, drawn in by the inspiring stories and impactful results shared by the teens. This ripple effect of empowerment and education is a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives like EFNEP, fostering growth and positive change at every turn.



Ms. Peebles, a dedicated community outreach worker, leading teens through hands-on cooking and nutrition education sessions.



Youth at the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Youth Center dress up resembling fresh produce, showcasing one of their unique marketing strategies.

EMPOWERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS THROUGH THE JJK FAN FARMERS MARKET STAND

In just two short years, the JJK FAN farmers market stand has blossomed into a remarkable success story, all thanks to the dedication and ingenuity of the JJK Youth. Led by 4-H Youth Development Educator Grace, who infused elements of business, accounting, and marketing into the program, these young entrepreneurs have flourished. They've embraced leadership roles and confidently navigated significant business decisions, including their latest venture: investing in eye-catching marketing enhancers like the iconic strawberry costume adorning their stand. Their efforts haven't gone unnoticed; the farmers' market stand has garnered a loyal customer base, including teachers, staff, parents, and local organizations. Through this initiative, these young visionaries are not just selling produce but cultivating valuable skills and fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship that will serve them well into the future.



USDA GRANT: BRIDGING THE URBAN, RURAL DIVIDE

Through the JJK FAN initiative, youth from East St. Louis and Waterloo engaged in practical research, monitoring corn growth in both urban and rural settings. This hands-on experience not only educates them about agriculture but also exposes them to potential career paths in the field. Students spent time at the JJK FAN Center and Baebler Educational Farm, alongside Illinois Extension staff where they participated in immersive learning experiences. These experiences provide valuable insights and foster connections among participants. Feedback from the second year of the program has been overwhelmingly positive. One participant expressed a strong preference for the Summer 2023 session, highlighting the sense of togetherness fostered by the program. This underscores the initiative's success in breaking down barriers and promoting unity across diverse communities.



Youth used the data and information they gathered from their corn research to develop presentation boards, which were presented at the Danforth Plant Science Center at the end of summer.



Youth learning how to use a blender while crafting nutritious green smoothies.

SEED TO TABLE: CULTIVATING YOUTH WELLNESS AT JACKIE JOYNER-KERSEE FOUNDATION

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and 4-H Educator Grace joined forces to create Seed to Table, a 3-day mini-camp for youth enrolled in the 2023 Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation summer camp. This collaborative effort featured nine hours of engaging 4-H garden-related activities, led by Grace, and an additional nine hours of EFNEP nutrition and cooking content, spearheaded by the EFNEP team. Team efforts captured measurable impacts on students. Grace recruited 24 students aged 7 to 13 to attend each day. This ensured that a highly engaged, consistent group of students participated in a high-quality program. The program yielded impressive results, with an average attendance of 2.44 days per student. Tests demonstrated an improvement of 14-22% for correct answers related to reading seed packets for gardening information. Post-surveys revealed positive changes in students' attitudes and behaviors, particularly in their approach to cooking and consuming healthy foods. 98% of the participants indicated they wanted to help cook food more, and over 70% indicated they tried new ways to eat fruits and vegetables. The success of Seed to Table extended beyond measurable impacts, fostering a newfound appreciation for plants and healthy eating among the youth participants.





A student holding a chick from one of the eggs that hatched.



A feathered success: Illinois 4-H program's egg-citing journey

In the spring of 2023, a 4-H Educator with Illinois Extension took the helm of an exciting program called “Embryology and Incubation,” which quickly became a hit among young learners. Working with eggs sourced from Hale Family Farm, the educator embarked on a fascinating journey of incubating and hatching eggs right before the eyes of over 100 eager students aged 5-13 at the Jackie Joyner-Kersey Foundation.

As the weeks passed, the students marveled at the miracle of life as the eggs hatched into adorable chicks. Alongside witnessing the hatching process, the students delved into the intricate world of embryo development, explored various chicken breeds, and learned how to care for the newly hatched chicks. The hands-on experience captivated their minds and ignited their curiosity.

Once the chicks had grown beyond their classroom confines, they found a new home at another farm. Despite leaving the classroom, the chicks remained a topic of conversation among the students, who eagerly awaited the next installment of the program in 2024. The chicks became local celebrities, drawing the attention of not only the JJK staff and families but also community members who visited the school.

One student summed up the sentiment perfectly, exclaiming, “This is why I come here – for the chickees!” The program’s success surpassed all previous Extension programs, leaving a lasting impression on everyone involved.



EFNEP cultivates healthy habits and leadership skills through Youth Cooking School sessions

Personal health decisions are influenced by the broader community and environment where we live. By working together, we can create environments where healthy choices are the easy choices. Classrooms, school cafeterias, food pantries, workplaces, and other built environments play an important role in promoting health and well-being.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Program actively engages hundreds of youth in Madison and St. Clair counties annually through dynamic youth cooking schools aimed at promoting health and well-being. These classes equip youth with essential culinary skills, which they then apply at home.

One of the standout recipes that sparked excitement among students was caramel popcorn.

In a class facilitated by Ms. Tiffany Brown, STEM Educator, and accompanied by Chastity, an Illinois Extension Community Outreach Worker, Ms. Brown documented the experience, noting, “It was enjoyable to make homemade caramel popcorn. Although we opted for a microwave for efficiency, the process was still engaging for the students.”

Participants apply skills learned, such as maintaining the cleanliness of hands and surfaces and changing gloves when transitioning between tasks. One of the concepts that were introduced was being a sous chef, which involves directing and overseeing the entire recipe preparation process. By ensuring adherence to safety protocols in the kitchen, participants not only learned culinary skills but also developed leadership and teamwork abilities. EFNEP reached a total of 472 youth who enrolled in youth cooking schools, leaving a profound impact.



Participants made caramel popcorn which was a hit among students in youth cooking school class.



Community Outreach Worker Chastity provides students with hands on cooking experience.

EFNEP Overall Program Reach



3,656
participants



280
sessions



998
youth enrolled



56
adults enrolled

Students cultivate change: Cahokia Heights thrives with Growing Together Illinois grant

The “Growing Together Illinois” grant played a vital role in addressing food insecurity and enhancing access in Cahokia Heights. Sponsored by the Illinois Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP Ed), the grant supported the Cahokia High School Community garden for the second consecutive year.

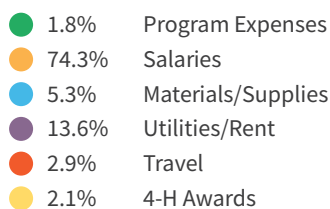
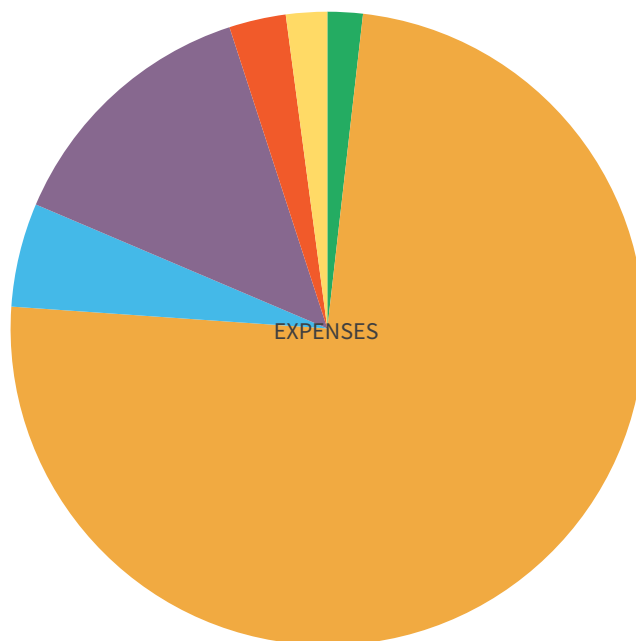
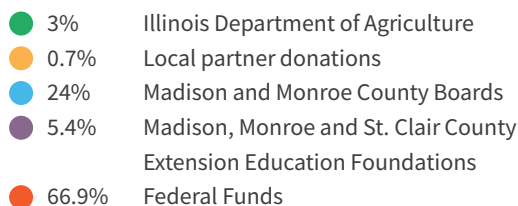
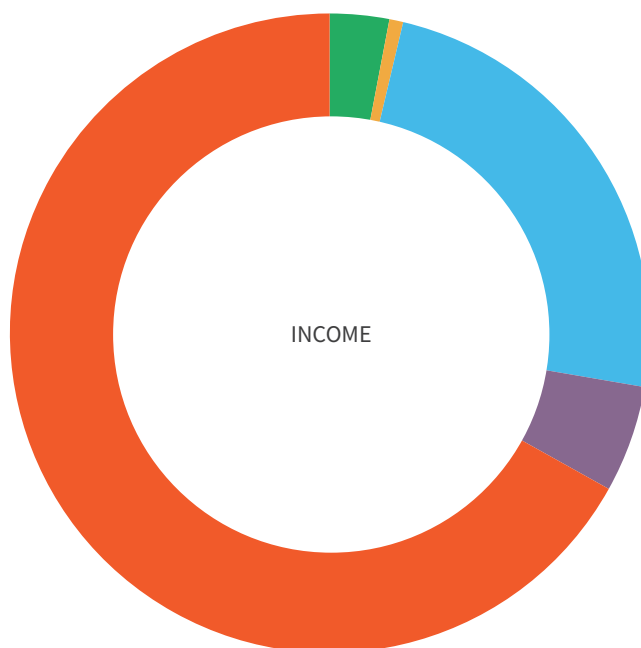
Under the guidance of an Illinois Extension 4-H educator, agriculture students actively engaged in a meaningful service-learning project. Eighty students participated and collaboratively explored ways to support their community and enrich the quality of donations at local food pantries. These students gained valuable insights into the challenges of food insecurity and were motivated to translate their ideas into action.

Their collective efforts resulted in a successful food drive, collecting 351 lbs of canned food and boxed goods. The entirety of this generous donation was contributed to a local food pantry, reinforcing the students’ commitment to nourishing their neighbors and making a positive impact on the community.



Empowering Illinois communities: funding education, fueling solutions

Illinois Extension is funded through a combination of local, county, state, and federal dollars, which are returned to the community through educational programming. Through learning partnerships that put knowledge to work, our mission is to develop programs and tools that align research to needs and translate research into action plans that allow Illinois families, businesses, and community leaders to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to changes and opportunities.





SNAP-Ed educator works with District 189's dietitian to implement share table and flavor station training.



SNAP-Ed introduces share tables and flavor stations to promote health and reduce waste

As part of District 189's ongoing commitment to promoting healthy eating habits and minimizing food waste within the National School Lunch Program, the SNAP-Ed team has actively supported the wellness committee's initiatives. Recently, the SNAP-Ed team conducted comprehensive training sessions for nine dedicated food service staff members at East St. Louis Senior High School, focusing on the implementation of share tables and flavor stations.

Equipped with valuable insights from the training, the staff is now well-prepared to introduce and manage these innovative features in the cafeteria. The aim is not only to reduce food waste but also to empower students with the freedom to personalize their meals through flavorful and low-sodium options.

Following the training, the team is eagerly anticipating the imminent launch of share tables and flavor stations at East St. Louis Senior High School in 2024.



SNAP-Ed and Granite City School District 9 forge path to healthier lunchrooms

In Madison County, a transformative partnership between SNAP-Ed and Granite City School District 9 has initiated a movement towards healthier lunchrooms. Over the past year, this collaboration has blossomed, reaching new heights and leaving a lasting impact on the schools. At the heart of this success lies a simple yet impactful initiative: the introduction of nutrition education posters in each of the nine schools within Granite City. Together with SNAP-Ed and the district food service director, these posters have become a welcomed change, fostering a culture of wellness and nourishment in the school cafeterias across the district. This partnership has laid the foundation for a healthier future that continues to flourish, nourishing minds and empowering students for years to come.

Lalumier Elementary's garden triumphs over food insecurity challenges

The Make Health Happen coalition joined forces with Healthier Together to nurture the Lalumier Elementary School community garden. Collaborating with St. Louis University dietetic students, the group aimed to cultivate vegetables but also work to provide nutrition education to the school's second-grade students. The garden became an interactive classroom, offering hands-on learning experiences.



Toolbox made available by Eastside Health District grant through the help of the SNAP-Ed team.

To enhance the garden's impact, crucial funds were needed. The coalition envisioned a sustainable future for Lalumier's community garden, recognizing the importance of a garden shed, a garden faucet, and essential equipment. The group secured a \$2,000 grant from the East Side Health District, which was strategically utilized to install a faucet and purchase a shed, transforming the garden into a hub for both education and growing.

Locally grown produce became a lifeline for the surrounding community and a local feeding site. The New Mount Zion food pantry benefited from the garden's produce and received fresh vegetables for their Saturday meal giveaways. Despite facing challenges, such as construction disrupting the water supply, volunteers from the community worked together, picking produce and ensuring that the garden continues to flourish. The garden defied the odds, producing an estimated 60 pounds of fresh, nourishing produce.



24
Partnerships with K-12 Schools



17
Partnerships with Emergency Food Sites



2
Partnerships with Early Childhood Centers



23
Partnerships with other types of organizations



1,186
Nutrition Education Classes



2,853
Nutrition Education Participants



84
Policy systems, and or environmental changes adopted by SNAP-Ed partner organizations

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