



Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Impact.

ABCs of Nutrition

Preparing School Food Service Teams

University of Illinois Extension Educator Ashley Hoffman partnered with the Illinois Department of Education to provide the annual ABCs of Nutrition training for school food service professionals from across the region at Centralia High School in July. Jefferson County schools represented included Rome Grade School, McClellan Grade School, Spring Garden Grade School, Woodlawn Grade School, Bethel Grade School, Farrington Grade School, and Waltonville Grade School.

The training equipped participants with the knowledge and skills needed to meet annual professional development requirements while helping ensure local students have access to safe, nutritious meals during the upcoming school year.

Community Benefits

- Improve food safety practices in school kitchens to prevent foodborne illness and create safer dining environments.
- Equip food service professionals to provide nutritious, high-quality meals that support student health, growth, and academic success.
- Ensure school nutrition programs remain up to date with current regulations, best practices, and food safety standards through professional development.
- Increase efficiency, improved meal quality, and reduce waste by enhancing staff knowledge and toolkits.
- Strengthen partnerships between Illinois Extension, the Illinois Department of Education, and local schools throughout the region.

78 Number of Attendees

Dear Community,

This summer, University of Illinois Extension continued to strengthen Jefferson County through partnerships that expanded opportunities for youth, families, and community members. New collaborations with Mt. Vernon Township High School introduced youth to Esports and technology-focused career pathways, while partnerships with United Way of South Central Illinois, local organizations, and community leaders created opportunities for hands-on learning, healthy living, and community engagement. Programs such as the Family Fun Pop-Up, Mt. Vernon Community Gardens, and National Night Out demonstrated how working together can improve access to education, strengthen community connections, and enhance quality of life for local residents.

Extension also continued to support local agriculture and youth development through programs that connected producers with university experts, equipped educators with classroom resources, and helped young people build life skills through 4-H, cooking schools, and leadership experiences. These efforts reflect Extension's commitment to delivering research-based education, fostering meaningful partnerships, and creating lasting impacts that help Jefferson County thrive.



JORDEE KOEHLER

County
Extension
Director

Jordée Koehler

Extension Everywhere

Illinois Extension provides relevant and research-based programming to address personal and community challenges, but understands that time and distance may be a barrier to attending in-person workshops and programming. Extension experts work to develop online video content and resources so that our communities can access our resources anytime.

Online Video Library



[go.illinois.edu/
YouTubeBCJMW](https://go.illinois.edu/YouTubeBCJMW)

Financial Resources



[go.illinois.edu/
BCJMWFinances](https://go.illinois.edu/BCJMWFinances)

4,155

People Reached by Finding
Financial Blog Posts in 2025

65,852

Horticulture How-To Video Views
in 2025

4-H in Jefferson County

Supporting Strong and Resilient Youth



Jefferson County 4-H Clubs
 Marlow Cardinals and Cloverbuds
 Prairie Wranglers and Cloverbuds
 Salt and Light and Cloverbuds
 Texico Stars and Cloverbuds
 Waltonville Bulldogs and Cloverbuds
 Waltonville Lucky Leprechauns and Cloverbuds

Jefferson County 4-H SPIN Clubs
 Jefferson County Teen Leaders

2025-26 Jefferson County 4-H Numbers

<u>Youth Members</u>	<u>Volunteers</u>
88	7
Youth Representing Jefferson County	
<u>County Fair General Projects</u>	<u>County Fair Livestock Entries</u>
207	325
<u>State Fair General Project Entries</u>	<u>State Fair Livestock Entries</u>
9	13
General Project Inspire Award - 1	

Show of Champions

Giving Youth Another Opportunity to Show Their Skills

University of Illinois Extension believes in allowing our youth to show off their skills and knowledge. The Show of Champions unites 4-H members from Bond, Clinton, Jefferson, Marion, and Washington counties, allowing them to meet youth from neighboring counties with the same passions and interests, making new friends along the way.

The 4-H youth who won special awards in their county shows are invited to showcase their knowledge, talents, and creativity and feature their high-quality animal handling skills. The fifth annual Show of Champions livestock shows were held on August 20 and 22 and the general projects show was held on August 27 at the Roland Lewis Building in Mt. Vernon.

Show of Champions Numbers

<u>Total General Projects</u>	<u>Total Livestock Entries</u>
74	154
<u>Jefferson County General Projects</u>	<u>Jefferson County Livestock</u>
11	55



4-H Shows

University of Illinois Extension provides youth with opportunities to develop skills, explore interests, and discover their passions through 4-H. The 4-H Shows give our local youth an opportunity to gain the confidence and skills needed for future success.

Community Benefits

- Develop responsibility in the care and wellbeing of show animals.
- Learn about animal nutrition and equipment needed for animal care.
- Connect youth with peers who have the same passions and interests as them.
- Develop independence in youth to research and pursue general projects that they find interesting.
- Connect youth with community members and professionals as they work through their projects.
- Provide youth with opportunities to set goals, practicing and learning new skills, and building confidence as they work on and present their projects.



Youth Cooking School

Expanding the Summer Cooking School Program

Illinois Extension expanded cooking schools this summer to provide a hands-on cooking experience for local youth. Illinois Extension continues to invest in nutrition and cooking education helping equip the next generation with skills that promote healthier lifestyles and greater independence in the kitchen.

Skills Learned

- Measuring ingredients accurately.
- Following recipes and cooking instructions.
- Identifying and using kitchen tools and equipment properly and safely.
- Practicing food safety and sanitation.
- Checking safe cooking temperatures.



Community Benefits

- Increase nutrition knowledge, help youth make healthier food choices and provide a basis for improved long-term health and wellness.
- Build confidence and independence, preparing youth to safely prepare meals for themselves and their families.
- Youth develop practical life skills such as meal planning, food safety and following directions.
- Expand nutrition improving access to nutrition education for youth in rural communities.
- Reduce food waste by teaching youth how to properly use and store ingredients.
- Develop lifelong skills and habits, reducing future health risks associated with poor nutrition.

Summer Family Fun Pop-Up

Strengthening Our Communities With Collaboration

This summer, families gathered at Veterans Memorial Park for a Family Fun Pop-Up featuring hands-on farm activities and grocery games. Through partnerships with local organizations, families learned about agriculture, healthy food choices, and smart shopping while building community connections.

Partners

United Way of South Central Illinois
Cedarhurst Center for the Arts
Mt. Vernon Rotary
Mt. Vernon Tourism

Mt. Vernon Community Gardens

Growing Food, Growing Community

Through a partnership between **United Way of South Central Illinois** and University of Illinois Extension, the Mt. Vernon Community Gardens provide residents with a place to grow fresh produce, learn gardening skills, and connect with their neighbors. More than just a gardening space, the gardens help improve access to healthy food, encourage community engagement, and demonstrate how local partnerships can create lasting benefits for the community.



Mt. Vernon National Night Out

Working Together to Build a Stronger Community

Partnerships were at the heart of Mount Vernon's National Night Out, bringing together the Mount Vernon Police Department, city leaders, county board members, community organizations, and University of Illinois Extension to strengthen connections between residents and local first responders.

Extension Educator Chris Lueking assisted with a community tree-planting project that symbolized the collaboration, resilience, and shared commitment of partners working together to build a stronger, more connected community.

New E-Sports Opportunities

Expanding Opportunities Through Innovation and Esports

Through a new partnership with Mt. Vernon Township High School, 4-H launched an Esports program that connects youth with gaming technology and career opportunities. This collaboration highlights the value of school partnerships by providing engaging, future-focused educational experiences.



Learned Skills

Teamwork
Collaboration
Communication
Sportsmanship
Confidence
Critical Thinking
Problem Solving

Upcoming Events

We believe in the communities we serve and are committed to our mission of developing educational programs, extending knowledge, and building partnerships to support people, communities, and their environments as part of the state's land-grant institution.

September Events

Sept 12-Nov 7 (Tuesdays) | 5:30-7:30 pm

Master Naturalist Training (18+)
Patriot's Park, Greenville

Sept 14 | 5:30-8:30 pm

Rain Garden Training (18+)
Jefferson County Extension Office

Sept 15 | 2-4 pm

Back to Basics: Beekeeping (18+)
Big T's Honey Bee Farm, Greenville

Sept 15 | 4-5 pm

4-H Creative Makers: Apples Edition (Ages 5-18)
Okawville Farmers Market

Sept 15 | 5-6 pm

4-H Bouquets & Bows Workshop (Ages 8-18)
Clinton County Extension Office

Sept 21 | 5:30-8:30 pm

Rain Garden Training (18+)
Jefferson County Extension Office

Sept 25 | 9 am - Noon

Rain Garden Installation (18+)
Jefferson County Extension Office

Sept 28 | 5:30-7 pm

4-H Pumpkins & Petals (Ages 8-18)
Marion County Extension Office

Sept 29-Oct 27 (Tuesdays) | 5:30-7:30 pm

4-H Junior Master Naturalist: Forestry Program (Ages 8-18)
Patriot's Park, Greenville

Jefferson County

4202 Williamson Pl, Ste 2, Mt. Vernon
Phone: 618-242-0780
Monday - Friday,
8 a.m. to Noon & 1 - 4:30 p.m.

Event Calendar



[extension.illinois.edu/
bcjmjw/events](https://extension.illinois.edu/bcjmjw/events)

Check Out More Information Online



extension.illinois.edu/bcjmjw



go.illinois.edu/YouTubeBCJMW



go.illinois.edu/FacebookBCJMW

College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences.

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October Events

Oct. 1 | 10:30 am- Noon

Back to Basics: Composting 101 (18+)
Clinton County Extension Office

Oct. 8 | 5-6 pm

Bond County 4-H Open House (All Ages)
Bond County Extension Office

Oct. 10 | 9-11 am

Back to Basics: Basic Tree Care (18+)
Carlyle Lake Visitor Center

Oct. 12 | 9-10 am

4-H Fashion on a Budget: Smart Shopping & Personal Style (Ages 8-18)
Roxzen Rose Boutique

Oct. 12 | 9:30-10:30 am

4-H Under the Hood Auto Workshop (Ages 8-18)
K & J Chevrolet

Oct. 12 | 10 am-Noon

4-H Watts Up? Electricity Workshop (Ages 8-18)
Marion County Extension Office

Oct. 12 | 1-2 pm

4-H Woodworking Workshop (Ages 8-18)
Washington County Extension Education Center

Oct. 12 | 1-4 pm

4-H The Great Pumpkin Build Workshop (Ages 8-18)
Marion County Extension Office

Oct. 12 | 2:30-5 pm

Woodworking Workshop (Advanced Session) (Ages 8-18)
Washington County Extension Education Center

Oct 13 | 4-5 pm

Pizza and Herb Session (Ages 5-18)
Okawville Farmers Market

Oct 16 | 9-11 am

Ag Explorers Workshop
Gateway FS in Venedy

Oct. 17 | 10-11:30 am

4-H Frames of Fall: A Photography Adventure (Ages 8-18)
Marlow's Pumpkin Patch

Oct. 20 | 4:30-5:30 pm

Clinton County 4-H Open House (All Ages)
Clinton County Extension Office

Oct. 26 | 6-7 pm

4-H Sew Ready: Basic Sewing Skills for Everyday Life (Ages 8-18)
Jefferson County Extension Office



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