



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. Marion County schools represented included Raccoon Grade School, Selmaville Grade School, Centralia High School, Hawthorn Elementary School, Franklin Park Middle School, Central City Grade School, South Central Elementary School, Patoka Grade School, Patoka High School, Odin Grade School, Bridges Learning District (KSED), Salem High School, Centralia City School District, and Kell 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 create meaningful learning opportunities for Marion County residents through strong community partnerships and research-based education. Collaborations with the Kinmundy Public Library and Salem Public Library introduced youth and families to gardening, science, and healthy living through hands-on programs designed to spark curiosity and build lifelong learning skills. Extension also connected local producers and educators with university expertise through programs focused on agricultural innovation and classroom agriculture education, helping strengthen both local agriculture and youth development.

Partnerships remained at the center of our impact. Through a collaboration between the Marion County Farm Bureau, Ag in the Classroom, the Marion County Agricultural Fair, and Extension, more than 1,000 youth participated in Kids' Day at the Fair, building connections with local agriculture and community organizations. Combined with strong participation in 4-H and youth cooking programs, these efforts are helping equip young people with valuable life skills, strengthen community connections, and ensure Marion County continues to thrive for future generations.



JORDEE KOEHLER

**County
Extension
Director**

Jordee Koehler

Summer Ag Institute

Connecting Ag and Natural Resources to the Classroom

Illinois Extension Educator Chris Lueking engaged local ag educators during the Summer Ag Institute in Salem. Local educators toured the demonstration garden beds and sensory herb gardens at the Salem Community Garden, exploring practical ways to integrate agriculture and horticulture into their local schools.

Teacher Benefits

- Teachers receive educational resources, lesson worksheets, and activities designed to enhance agricultural literacy in the classroom.
- Connect local ag teachers with the latest research from University of Illinois.

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 Marion County

Supporting Strong and Resilient Youth



Marion County 4-H Clubs

Hoofbeats and Cloverbuds
Kell Cowpunchers and Cloverbuds
Kinmundy Tornadoes and Cloverbuds
Marion County Pioneers and Cloverbuds
Meachum Worthwhile and Cloverbuds
Omega Shamrocks and Cloverbuds
Patoka Panthers and Cloverbuds
SEMCO Servers and Cloverbuds
Showstrings and Cloverbuds
Shriver Sircle and Cloverbuds

Marion County 4-H SPIN Clubs

Livestock Judging
Marion County Federation
Shooting Sports - Air Pistol
Shooting Sports - Claybusters

2025-26 Marion County 4-H Numbers

Youth Members

200

Volunteers

31

Youth Representing Marion County

County Fair
General Projects

123

County Fair
Livestock Entries

492

State Fair
General Project
Entries

18

State Fair
Livestock
Entries

42

General Project Champions - 4
General Project Reserve Champions - 1
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

Total General
Projects

74

Marion County
General Projects

13

Total Livestock
Entries

154

Marion County
Livestock

58



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.



Getting Youth Into Gardening

Library Partnerships Cultivate Young Gardeners

4-H partnered with Kinmundy and Salem Public Libraries this summer for several youth programs. Illinois Extension seeks to create learning opportunities that connect youth and their families to gardening, science, and healthy living. These programs inspire curiosity and encourage youth to become the next generation of gardeners, lifelong learners, and community leaders.

Salem Library Programs

Plant Propagation Stations
Pizza Garden Activity
Junior Master Gardener Program

Kinmundy Library Programs

Hydroponic Gardening
Pizza Garden Activity



Dairy Tech Tour

Strengthening Support for Local Dairy Agriculture

Illinois Extension Educator Chris Lueking participated in the Dairy Tech Tour in Clinton County. Illinois Extension staff, University of Illinois faculty, agricultural professionals and local producers met to explore and discuss emerging technologies and innovative management practices. The tour provided a valuable opportunity for producers to engage directly with university experts, exchange knowledge, and discuss research-based solutions to challenges facing today's dairy industry.

Community Partners

- Illinois Milk Producers Association
- Illinois Farm Bureau
- Illinois Department of Agriculture
- Dr. Derek Nolan, University of Illinois Extension Faculty Specialist

Local Benefits

- Build a more resilient dairy industry.
- Inform local producers about new technologies available to improve production.
- Provide the latest research-based information to assist on-farm decision-making.

Marion County Kids Day

Partners in Agriculture, Investing in Youth

Through a partnership between the **Marion County Farm Bureau**, **Ag in the Classroom**, the **Marion County Agricultural Fair**, and University of Illinois Extension, Kids' Day at the Fair welcomed more than 1,000 youth who enjoyed activities, interacted with livestock, and connected with local agriculture organizations and community members while enjoying free food and family-friendly activities.

This long-standing partnership helps community partners provide positive youth experiences, and strengthens the connection between local families and the agricultural organizations.



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

Marion County

1404 E Main, Rt 50 East, Salem
Phone: 618-548-1446
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



Illinois Extension

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