



Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Impact.

STEM-tastic Builders Challenge

Building Confidence, Creativity, and the Next Generation of Innovators Through STEM

The STEM-tastic Builders Challenge provided local youth with exciting hands-on opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through creativity, teamwork, and innovation. Participants tackled a variety of engaging activities, including Makey Makey projects, tower-building challenges, paper airplane launcher competitions, boat design and buoyancy tests and LEGO engineering builds. Each activity encouraged youth to think critically, test solutions, learn from setbacks, and work collaboratively to improve their designs.



Throughout the year, youth also participated in LEGO design challenges that fostered imagination, engineering skills, and creative problem-solving. The program culminated in a judged showcase where participants presented their creations and demonstrated the knowledge and skills they had developed in design, communication, teamwork, and engineering. By exploring STEM in a fun and supportive environment, participants gained confidence as builders, creators, and future innovators while discovering new possibilities for learning and growth.

Dear Community,

This summer, University of Illinois Extension continued to serve Washington County through strong partnerships, youth development, and research-based education. Master Gardener Volunteers partnered with the Nashville Public Library and Ashley Public Library to provide hands-on programs that connected youth with environmental stewardship, composting, pollinator education, and sustainable gardening practices. These experiences helped empower young people to make positive impacts in their homes, gardens, and local communities.

Extension also strengthened local agriculture and youth opportunities by connecting producers with university expertise through programs such as the Dairy Tech Tour, while supporting the growth and success of local 4-H members. With 224 youth members and 32 volunteers engaged in 4-H programs, Washington County continues to benefit from educational experiences that build leadership, life skills, and community connections. Together, these efforts are helping create a stronger, more resilient future for Washington County residents of all ages.

Jordae Koehler



JORDAE KOEHLER

**County
Extension
Director**

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 Washington County

Supporting Strong and Resilient Youth



Washington County 4-H Clubs

Country Clovers and Cloverbuds
Hoyleton Boosters and Cloverbuds
Nashville Eager Beavers and Cloverbuds
Oakdale 4-Leaf Clovers and Cloverbuds
Okawville Busy Bees and Cloverbuds
Venedy Black Squirrels and Cloverbuds

Washington County 4-H SPIN Clubs

Livestock Judging
Quilt of Valor
Washington County Shooting Sports - Archery
Washington County Shooting Sports - Air Rifle
Washington County Teen Leaders

2025-26 Washington County 4-H Numbers

Youth Members

224

Volunteers

32

Youth Representing Washington County

County Fair General Projects

259

County Fair Livestock Entries

370

State Fair General Project Entries

36

State Fair Livestock Entries

12

General Project Champions - 2
General Project Reserve Champions - 8
General Project Inspire Award - 4

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

Washington County General Projects

32

Total Livestock Entries

154

Washington County Livestock

39



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 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

This Summer, Master Gardener Volunteers partnered with both Nashville and Ashley Public Libraries to provide multiple youth programs. Volunteers connected environmental stewardship and sustainable gardening to everyday practices, including lessons on vermicomposting and Monarch butterflies. The long-term impact extends beyond the classroom, empowering students to make positive changes that benefit their gardens, neighborhoods, and local ecosystems now and into the future.

Skills learned

Proper Composting Techniques
Creating Nutrient-Rich Compost
Reducing Household Waste
Use of Compost in Home Gardening
Importance of Pollinators
Maintaining Healthy Ecosystems
Supporting Endangered Wildlife

Local Benefits

- Youth gained hands-on skills in composting, pollinator conservation, and gardening.
- Enhanced understanding of the importance of Monarch butterflies and other pollinators to local ecosystems.
- Encouraged youth to adopt environmentally responsible practices at home and in their communities.
- Fostered curiosity and appreciation for nature among young participants.
- Created opportunities for families to engage in gardening and conservation activities together.
- Built stronger community connections by bringing together volunteers, libraries, youth, and families around shared learning experiences.



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.

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

Washington County

9623 Wall St., Nashville
Phone: 618-327-8881
Monday - Thursday,
7 a.m. to Noon & 1 - 5 p.m.
Friday by appointment

Event Calendar



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

Check Out More Information Online



extension.illinois.edu/bcjmw



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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