

EXTENSION SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Tara Heath attains Certified Crop Adviser certification

Tara Heath, commercial agriculture educator, has recently been certified by the American Society of Agronomy as a Certified Crop Adviser (CCA). To attain this prestigious certification Tara passed both an International CCA Exam and the Illinois CCA Exam. Tara received her Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture with an emphasis in horticulture from Western Illinois University and Master of Science degree in crop sciences with an emphasis in horticultural food systems from University of Illinois. She has over 20 years of experience in landscape management, having served as the Superintendent of Grounds at Western Illinois University. She works alongside her father, brother, sister-in-law, nephew, and husband on their 3,000-acre farm operation in McDonough County where she grew up.

CCAs are recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) as eligible to register as Technical Service Providers. They will provide assistance to farmers in protecting resources through conservation planning in soil and water, nutrient, crop, and pest management. CCAs are also recognized as Agricultural Experts by the USDA Risk Management Agency which administers the Federal crop insurance programs.

Tara is part of an elite crew of CCA professionals. Since 1993, only 13,500 people in the United States, Canada, and India have earned and maintained their CCA designation.

To maintain her certification Tara will complete 40 hours of approved continuing education units every two years. CEUs must be divided between nutrient management, soil and water management, integrated pest management, crop management, and professional development. Research scientists at land grant universities provide much of this cutting edge training.

"The CCA certification aligns perfectly with our mission at Illinois Extension," Tara explained. "Both focus on providing unbiased, research-based information. The CCA training further developed my knowledge base of balancing the needs of production agriculture with environmental and consumer concerns."

"This certification confirms and enhances Tara's subject matter expertise in commercial agriculture," stated Earl Allen, Extension county director. "I am excited about her accomplishment and am confident it will strengthen her ability to serve our local farmers and ag industries well."

As a commercial ag educator Tara's focus is on traditional crop systems (corn/soybeans). Her background in horticulture allows her to provide assistance in specialty crops such as pumpkins, grapes, and agroforestry.



Photo by Anita Wilkinson | Illinois Extension

Tara Heath, commercial ag educator, recently completed her certification by the American Society of Agronomy as a Certified Crop Adviser. This is a prestigious certification that includes continuing education.

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