

FCS Newsletter

Family Life | Nutrition and Wellness | Consumer Economics

Livingston, McLean, & Woodford Counties

VOLUME 1 | November 2025

From Memory to Meaning: The Power of Holiday Rituals

Growing up, I had two distinctive impressions of pumpkin pie. Both of my grandmothers made homemade pies each year, but each was a different experience. One created a delectable homemade crust with a light, pumpkin filling. My grandma on the other side made a pie that was equally flavorful but heavily spiced, with a deep, rich color. Both were delicious in very different ways.

Looking back, these pie experiences remind me that while traditions may differ, it's the memories and feelings they create that truly matter.

What are some of your memories from holidays gone by? Is it the fall smells of a simmer pot on the stove? Turkey roasting in the oven? Or a pie cooling on a rack? Maybe it's a treasured ornament or a favorite song that brings back a flood of memories. Regardless of what form they take, holiday traditions are important. They help create a sense of closeness in families, especially during the holidays.

These experiences offer a sense of identity and belonging across generations. They ground us in the past and help us find our place in the world and within our families.

According to research published in the *Journal of Family Psychology*, family routines and rituals help members gain a sense of belonging. This is especially meaningful now, as many people are struggling with social connection.

Traditions foster stability, closeness, and emotional resilience. They're important for our mental health—at any age.

Creating or continuing traditions helps youth develop a sense of identity and belonging. For older generations, passing down traditions offers a sense of purpose and connection to the past. If you're feeling pressure to create the next greatest family tradition—please don't. The important thing is the ritual itself, not its perfection. The pie doesn't have to be exactly the way grandma made it. What matters is that we gather, share stories, and keep the tradition alive in whatever form fits our lives today.

In my own family, we've adapted our traditions. With a smaller extended family and my less-than-stellar ability to coordinate a multi-course meal, we've combined the traditional holiday dinner with something more informal: homemade pizza. My kids love pizza far more than turkey or glazed ham and sides that often go uneaten. So presto! We've created a new Christmas dinner tradition. It may look different than others' holiday feasts, but it works for us. We still share stories and laughter as we create our masterpieces on the dough.

This new tradition harkens back to one of my core memories from childhood. I vividly remember pizza nights at my grandparents' house—bowls full of toppings and cheese lined the table, and we'd rotate around, building our own pizzas. More than



20 adults and children gathered together, creating everything from plain cheese to fully loaded veggie and meat combos. But those nights weren't really about the pizza. They were about connection. About laughter. About passing down stories of how they grew up.

That's what I want to continue sharing with my own family and future generations. We all need a tie to the past and to the people who helped shape who we are.

So, heading into the holiday season, can I ask you to do me a favor?

Remember one of your favorite family traditions or rituals from years gone by. If you're still observing it, keep it going—or adapt it to fit your family as it is now. Or maybe it's time to start a new tradition. Connect, reflect, and share this holiday season.

I'd love to hear how your traditions go in 2025.

Written by Family Life Educator, Sara Attig

Upcoming Events

Discover workshops, classes, and programs designed to support healthy living, strong families, and thriving communities—brought to you by University of Illinois Extension Family & Consumer Sciences.

Tai Chi Together: Monthly Practice & Refresh

November 4th | 5:30-6:30pm | Livingston County Extension Office

Have you completed the Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program and want to keep your practice going? Join us once a month for a relaxed and welcoming refresher session designed for past participants. These gatherings offer a chance to revisit key movements, reconnect with others, and continue building strength, balance, and mindfulness.

No new instruction will be provided—just time to move, breathe, and flow together.*

Open to previous participants of Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention. Register at go.illinois.edu/TaiChiTogether

Livingston County Extension Office - 1412 S. Locust St, Pontiac, IL 61764

Diabetes Clinic - Medication 101

November 6th | 1:30-2:30pm | Livingston County Health Department

Learn more about the role medications can play in supporting diabetes management. This session will offer approachable information and guidance to help participants feel more confident navigating their treatment. There is no cost to attend this program and no registration is necessary.

Livingston County Health Department - 310 E. Torrence Ave, Pontiac, IL 61764

Wits Workout | Pontiac

November 11th | 1:30-3:00pm | OSF St. James John W. Albrecht Medical Center

Does your brain need a fitness routine? Join University of Illinois Educator Sara Attig as she leads participants through interactive activities designed to exercise the brain to maintain and enhance cognitive function and memory. You are never too young or too old to get started training your brain, so join Sara in this fun and informative class.

OSF Saint James - John W. Albrecht Medical Center - 2500 W Reynolds St, Pontiac, IL 61764

Simmer Up to Soup | Eureka

November 11th | 5:30-6:30pm | Eureka Public Library

A bowl of homemade soup on a cold day can be a comforting meal. Come and learn the many types of soup and ways to make them healthy and flavorful. You'll receive a packet of recipes and taste a hearty bowl of soup! There is no cost to attend! This program will take place at Eureka Public Library (202 S Main St, Eureka, IL 61530). Register by calling the library at (309) 467-2922.

Eureka Public Library - 202 S Main St, Eureka, IL 61530

Find more upcoming events at go.illinois.edu/lmwevents

Upcoming Events

Discover workshops, classes, and programs designed to support healthy living, strong families, and thriving communities—brought to you by University of Illinois Extension Family & Consumer Sciences.

Wits Workout | Eureka

November 12th | 1:00-2:30pm | Eureka Public Library

Does your brain need a fitness routine? Join University of Illinois Educator Sara Attig as she leads participants through interactive activities designed to exercise the brain to maintain and enhance cognitive function and memory. You are never too young or too old to get started training your brain, so join Sara in this fun and informative class

Eureka Public Library - 202 S Main St, Eureka, IL 61530

Diabetes Clinic - Holiday Party

November 13th | 1:30-2:30pm | Eureka United Methodist Church

Come and have some fun at the last Diabetes Clinic for the year! Join us for a festive holiday party filled with fun and learning! Enjoy delicious appetizers, engage in an interactive educational game, and mingle with friends in a warm and cheerful atmosphere. Let's come together to celebrate the season and what we have accomplished this year.

Eureka United Methodist Church - 208 N Callender St, Eureka, IL 61530

Tai Chi Together: Monthly Practice & Refresh

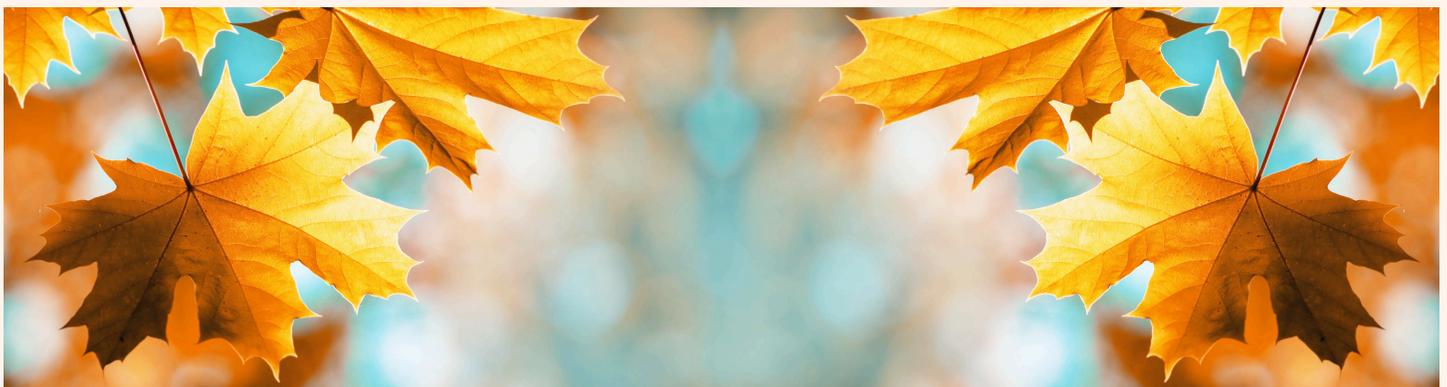
November 24th | 1:30-2:30pm | McLean County Extension Office

Have you completed the Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention program and want to keep your practice going? Join us once a month for a relaxed and welcoming refresher session designed for past participants. These gatherings offer a chance to revisit key movements, reconnect with others, and continue building strength, balance, and mindfulness.

No new instruction will be provided—just time to move, breathe, and flow together.*

Open to previous participants of Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention. Register at go.illinois.edu/TaiChiTogether

McLean County Extension Office - 1615 Commerce Pkwy, Bloomington, IL 61704



Looking Ahead

Wits Workout | Pontiac

December 2nd | 1:30-3:00pm | OSF St. James John W. Albrecht Medical Center

For more information visit go.illinois.edu/lmwevents

Wits Workout | Eureka

December 10th | 1:00-2:30pm | Eureka Public Library

For more information visit go.illinois.edu/lmwevents

Tai Chi Together: Monthly Practice & Refresh | McLean

December 15th | 1:30-2:30pm | McLean County Extension Office

For more information visit go.illinois.edu/TaiChiTogether

Tai Chi Together: Monthly Practice & Refresh | Livingston

December 16th | 5:30-6:30pm | Livingston County Extension Office

For more information visit go.illinois.edu/TaiChiTogether

Find Creative Ways to Use Leftovers

Instead of tossing extra food or eating the same meal day after day, try transforming leftovers into something new. With just a few simple tips, you can turn last night's dinner into a fresh stir-fry, hearty soup, cheesy quesadilla, or cozy casserole. It's an easy way to save time, reduce food waste, and stretch your grocery budget. Want some inspiration to get started? Visit our webpage for creative leftover ideas and recipe guidance!

<https://extension.illinois.edu/food/leftovers>

Contact the Team



Jenna Smith
Nutrition and Wellness Educator

Phone: 309-663-8306

Email: jessmith6@illinois.edu



Sara Attig
Family Life Educator

Phone: 815-842-1776

Email: sattig@illinois.edu



Sky Holland
FCS Program Coordinator

Phone: 309-663-8306

Email: skylarh@illinois.edu

Want to receive the monthly newsletter? Subscribe at go.illinois.edu/lmwfcnewsletter



Illinois Extension
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
University of Illinois | U.S. Department of Agriculture | Local Extension Councils Cooperating
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.
If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact us
Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time for meeting your access needs.