



Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Impact.



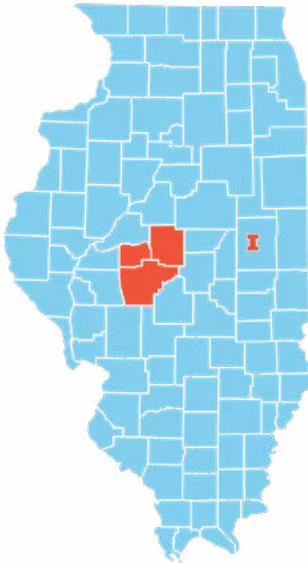
Serving Logan, Menard, and Sangamon Counties

ILLINOIS EXTENSION IMPACT REPORT 2025





Terri Casey
County Director



Building a brighter future in Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties

Over the past year, University of Illinois Extension continued to deliver meaningful, research-based programs that strengthen the well-being of Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties. Our staff and volunteers worked across communities to increase access to learning, support local food systems, improve health outcomes, and provide hands-on educational experiences for youth and adults alike. In 2025, more than 32,000 attendees participated in Extension programs, and 12,900 volunteer hours further amplified our reach and impact. These numbers reflect the dedication of our staff, partners, and supporters who ensure that lifelong learning remains accessible to everyone we serve.

This year also brought new opportunities and significant challenges. Partnerships flourished, from expanding local foods initiatives to building robust horticulture, agriculture, and youth development experiences. New programs such as Hunters Feeding Illinois, expanded summer youth gardening, and enhanced school nutrition education have strengthened community resilience and connected families with vital resources. We also celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Master Gardener program.

At the same time, we faced staffing shortages and open positions within our 4-H program, and we suffered the sudden elimination of federal SNAP-Ed funding, a change that will substantially reduce our capacity to deliver essential nutrition education and will disrupt long-standing partnerships statewide. Despite these setbacks, our dedicated staff and community collaborators continue to innovate and find ways to support local needs.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to fostering strong community relationships and delivering programs that promote learning, health, and economic vitality. Whether through 4-H clubs that prepare youth for future careers, workshops that equip producers with business and production knowledge, or volunteer-driven initiatives that enhance the natural world and educate our communities, Extension’s mission continues to shine through in every project. Thank you to our volunteers, partners, county boards, and residents whose support makes this work possible. Together, we will continue building a brighter, more resilient future for our communities.

Terri Casey
County Director

Cover photo: A local Master Gardener volunteer shares knowledge with participants in the summer youth garden program developed in partnership with the Motherland Gardens Community Project and Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center.

Illinois Extension Makes an Impact

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land-grant mission thrives each day through Extension programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff that are responsive to eight strategic priorities:

-  Community
-  Economy
-  Environment
-  Food and Agriculture
-  Health
-  Partnerships
-  Technology and Discovery
-  Workforce Excellence

2025 Engagement

Extension leaders, staff, and stakeholders define priorities that create meaningful, mission-centered outcomes throughout the state:

738 Communities Served	831K+ Program Attendees	9.4M+ Webpage Views	9.8M+ Social Media Visibility	1.8M+ YouTube Impressions
249 Educational Sessions/Week (28K+ Annually)	83 Online Courses Accessed by 13K+ People	10,846 Local Government Education Webinar Reach	1,848 4-H Clubs 20,242 4-H Club Members	68,697 Fair Exhibits 295,379 4-H Experiences

Partnerships

Resource Generation

5,129 Program Volunteers	277 Community Gardens	2,830 School and Community Partners	\$15,026,392 Value of Volunteer Contributions	\$499,188 Value of Donated Produce Grown or Facilitated	\$960K+ External Funds Secured for SNAP-Ed Partners
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On July 4, 2025, the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act eliminated all funding for Illinois Extension's SNAP-Ed nutrition education program. Here's the impact by the numbers:

Up to \$135M Estimated Annual Loss in Future Economic Returns on Investment in Illinois	2 million+ Residents Lost Access to Food and Health Education	1,754 Partners Including Schools, Food Banks, Early Childhood Centers, Public Health Departments, and Local Agencies Impacted	200+ Staff Members Affected by Layoffs	30 Years of Infrastructure and Network Building for the SNAP-Ed Program Lost
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Community Connections in 2025

Local Extension staff partnered with or provided services for the following schools and organizations in 2025:

Adams Wildlife Sanctuary, Illinois Audubon Society	Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center	Lincoln Park District	Petersburg Veterinary Clinic
Addams Elementary School	Glenwood Middle School	Lincoln Public Library District	PORTA School District
Athens National Honor Society	Green Prairie Animal Hospital	Lincoln YMCA	Prairie State Beekeepers
Athens High School	Greenview Booster Club	Lindsay Elementary School	Project SCOPE
Athens Junior High School	Greenview Elementary School	Logan County Fairgrounds	Ridgely Elementary School
Athens Municipal Library	Hartsburg-Emden School District	Logan County Park and Trails Foundation	Riverton Middle School
Birth to Five Illinois, Region 17	Hazel Dell Elementary School	Marsh Elementary School	Sandburg Elementary School
Blackhawk Elementary School	Heartland Beef Alliance	McClermand Elementary School	Sangamon County Board, Farm to Table Advisory Committee
Bloomington City Council	Henson Robinson Zoo	McLean County Board	Sangamon County Department of Public Health
Butler Elementary School	Illinois 4-H Youth Leadership Team	Menard County Emergency Management Agency	Sangamon County Farm Bureau
Cantrall Elementary School	Illinois Department of Agriculture	Menard County Fairgrounds	Sangamon County Home and Community Education
Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology Mobile Science Learning Lab	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Menard County Fair Women's Club	Sherman Public Library District
Central Elementary School	Illinois Farm Bureau	Menard County Farm Bureau	Sojourn Shelter & Services
Central Illinois Foodbank	Illinois National Guard	Menard County Housing Authority	Southeast High School
Community Action Partnership of Central Illinois (Head Start)	Illinois Product Farmers Market	Menard County Sheriff's Department	Springfield Bonsai Society
Community Cottage Food Pantry	Illinois State Fairgrounds	Menard County Soil and Water Conservation District	Springfield Lincoln Land Chapter, American Sewing Guild
Compass for Kids	Indian Creek Farmstead	Midstate Meat Company	Table of Life Ministries
Dream Center	Kiwanis Club of Lincoln	Motherland Gardens Community Project	Turasky Meats
Earth Awareness Fair (City of Springfield)	Lee Elementary School	Mt. Pulaski Grade School	United Way of Central Illinois
Emden Grade School	Lincoln Daily News	National Weather Service Central Illinois	Village of Williamsville
Enos Elementary School	Lincoln Home National Historic Site, National Park Service	New Berlin School District	West Lincoln-Broadwell Elementary School
Fairview Elementary School	Lincoln Land Community College Child Development Center	New Holland-Middletown Elementary School	Williamsville Middle School
Family, Career and Community Leaders of America	Lincoln Land Community College Kreher Agriculture Center	New Salem Children's Center	Williamsville Public Library & Museum
Farm Credit Illinois	Lincoln Memorial Garden	Northwest Elementary School	
FarmFED Co-op	Lincoln Memorial Hospital Market	Oasis Senior Center	
Farmingdale Elementary School		Petersburg Observer	
Friends of the Sangamon Valley			



Commercial Agriculture



Farmers improve their business knowledge through local program

Local producers are concerned about the weakening ag economy. The combination of volatile market prices, unsure federal policies, and high input prices has placed producers in a tough situation.

To help producers learn or review important business management knowledge, local Commercial Agriculture Educator Reagen Tibbs created and taught a Farm Business Foundations program that covers financial statements, accounting software, marketing, crop insurance, estate planning, and more. The presentations and handouts are available to anyone on the local Extension website.

Along with Extension's research-backed information about production, local farmers can also benefit from trustworthy business management information.



320
Expert consultations with Extension staff



42
Educational sessions



Read the local Farm Focus blog
extension.illinois.edu/blogs/farm-focus



Learn more about local agriculture activities
extension.illinois.edu/LMS/commercial-agriculture

Dust storms have become a recurring issue each spring, so local Educator Reagen Tibbs worked closely with the National Weather Service office in Lincoln to help them understand how agricultural practices affect dust storms, as well as how to communicate with the public on the storms' impact. (photo taken May 2025 between Elkhart and Broadwell in Logan County)

Extension supports local foods initiative

Urban-rural connections and local/regional food systems can bring social, economic, and environmental benefits to communities, including more access to healthy food, increased local food purchases, decreased food miles, diversified crop production, community reinvestments, and community resilience. To bring these benefits to the area, Extension is partnering with the Sangamon County Board's Farm to Table Advisory Committee by hiring Hunter Buchanan as the new Local Foods Program Coordinator.



Hunter Buchanan

Buchanan is working to expand access to and availability of local food by developing partnerships and providing direct assistance to producers. As he meets stakeholders in the area, Buchanan is learning about the current obstacles growers and consumers are facing in the farm-to-table space. Based on local needs, programs and projects will be developed to advance the local food system.





Horticulture



Summer gardening program brings hands-on education to youth

Learning about nature and where food comes from can be challenging for youth who live in cities and have limited access to gardens and natural spaces. They miss the valuable hands-on experiences with nature that help build a stronger understanding and appreciation of how the world works.

Through a partnership with Motherland Gardens Community Project and Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center, Illinois Extension was able to directly connect with youth participating in their summer camp program. Extension staff developed a comprehensive series of fun and interactive lessons and activities that covered seeds, parts of a flower, parts of a plant, vermicomposting, earthworms, soil, mulch, herbs, birds, insects, and pollinators.

Master Gardener volunteers and Extension staff implemented the lessons, which took place twice a week for six weeks during the summer. Each session included a vegetable gardening lesson and a garden art activity. Participants also experienced a fresh produce sample tasting during each session.

Twenty-four youth and five youth mentors participated in the camp, receiving hands-on experiences that covered a full range of gardening education topics.



Learn more about local horticulture activities
extension.illinois.edu/LMS/horticulture



Master Gardener volunteers teach lessons on vegetable gardening and garden art to attendees of the Garvey-Tubman Cultural Arts & Research Center's summer camp program.



73
Master Gardener volunteers



24
Master Naturalist volunteers



94
Educational sessions (in-person and online)



5,939
Program attendance



7
Extension-supported gardens



125
Pounds of produce donated



Volunteers practice lifelong learning

Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers are constantly sharing their knowledge with others, but they are also continually learning.

Attendees at the annual Russel Allen Garden Day learned about microgreens, herbs, and spring vegetable gardening. The Native Garden Design series, held in partnership with Lincoln Memorial Garden, was a comprehensive guide for creating pollinator-friendly native plant gardens, covering initial planning to implementation.

An innovative learning experience in 2025 was a live chat via Zoom with author Amy Stewart to discuss her book, "The Earth Moved: On the Remarkable Achievements of Earthworms." Stewart shared insights into her inspiration for book topics and her hands-on research methods.



Volunteer Barbara Thompson participates in a hands-on Tropical Bonsai Workshop, taught by members of the Springfield Bonsai Society.



Local volunteers honored for exemplary service

Two local Master Gardeners were recognized at the state level for their exemplary contributions to the program in 2025. Cathy Slater and Tom Wilkin, both of Sangamon County, received the State Outstanding Master Gardener Award, which is given to individuals who demonstrate leadership and have volunteered more than 180 hours.



Cathy Slater



Tom Wilkin



Master Gardeners celebrate 50 years of helping others learn to grow

Hundreds of Master Gardener volunteers from across the state gathered in Springfield to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the program during their 2025 annual conference. Local staff and volunteers were integral to planning and executing an experience worthy of this special milestone. The two-day conference included educational sessions on topics such as native landscape design, tree care, soil health, bonsai cultivation, insect identification, and youth gardening. The keynote speaker shared insights on the therapeutic power of gardens.

My fellow horticulture educators coming together to lead six in-depth workshops was a highlight for me. Each session was designed to put gardening knowledge into real-world practice.

Horticulture Educator Jennifer Fishburn



One conference session took place at Lincoln Land Community College's Kreher Agriculture Center, where participants learned about topography and water runoff.





Youth Development



4-H prepares youth for future careers

Along with clubs and project work, 4-H helps youth prepare for careers through special programs and in-school activities, supporting the national 4-H initiative to build up youth who will be "Beyond Ready" for whatever their futures may hold.

CPR Training

Students at Athens High School gained the knowledge and confidence to respond in emergency situations through CPR certification training. This special opportunity was organized by 4-H in partnership with Erin Nelson, RN, PEL-CSN, and Rachel Skelton, both from Athens High School, along with Kolbe Huss from Menard County Emergency Management Agency and Illinois National Guard's Sergeant Toni Clark with Athens student enlistee Brooke Beatty. The program equipped students with the ability to recognize cardiac emergencies, perform chest compressions, and use automated external defibrillators, ensuring they are prepared to take action when needed.

I could honestly see myself doing something like this in the future, like EMS.

Athens High School student

4-H in the Classroom

Through Welcome to the Real World, students stepped into adult roles and discovered what it takes to manage careers, budgets, and everyday decisions. Health Rocks! encouraged youth to make positive choices and build resilience, while

Kitchen Chemistry and Cooking 101 brought science to life through fun, hands-on experiments and healthy cooking. Real Colors workshops helped youth and volunteers better understand themselves and each other, strengthening teamwork and leadership. Younger students explored creativity and confidence through Cloverbud activities, and the Youth Development Academy supported educators and volunteers with tools to create even more meaningful experiences. Together, these programs created a lasting impact by sparking curiosity and building skills.

Summer Camps

Youth were able to explore their interests and learn new skills during the fun and exciting summer activities provided by 4-H in Logan, Menard, and Sangamon counties. The programs were open to all youth and offered at no charge, thanks to support from generous local donors. Topics included:

- Nature Explorers: Discover the Great Outdoors! (held in partnership with Indian Creek Farmstead and Menard County Soil and Water Conservation District)
- Explore Science on Wheels! (held in partnership with the IGB Mobile Science Learning Lab)
- Discover, Learn, and Have Fun at 4-H Cloverbud Camps!
- 4-H Flight Camp: Explore the World of Flight! (held in partnership with the Williamsville Public Library & Museum)
- Get Ready to Cheer: Join Us for 4-H Cheer Camp!



503
4-H club members



67
Adult 4-H volunteers



36
4-H clubs



1,082
4-H show exhibits



5,529
4-H experiences (youth reached through special programs and in-school activities)



4-H'ers benefit from national partnership with Casey's

The Greenview Boosters 4-H Club received a warm welcome at Casey's #1716 in Athens as part of the Casey's and National 4-H Council Refuel Partnership. 4-H members met with store managers, regional and district directors, and national representatives to learn about Casey's commitment to supporting education and local youth programs. Members enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour, completed a scavenger hunt, and even took home their favorite pizza.



4-H members Macie Willis and Kirby Jo Bacon show their ham and pineapple pizza.



Learn more about local 4-H activities
extension.illinois.edu/LMS/4-H-youth-development



(left to right) Associate Dean and Director of Illinois Extension Matthew Vann, Menard County 4-H Program Coordinator Stacie Skelton, and 4-H Youth Development Educator Carissa Davis (not pictured: Office Associate Melissa Bland)

Menard County 4-H team earns Illinois Extension award

The Menard County 4-H team received the statewide Illinois Extension Promotional Excellence Award for their innovative new display that highlights the full scope of 4-H as a year-round inclusive learning experience. Launched during the county fair, the display connects classroom programs, leadership activities, and Cloverbud projects, giving viewers a comprehensive view of 4-H's impact in the community.

Local youth and a volunteer recognized for outstanding achievements

Local 4-H members and a longtime volunteer were recognized for their achievements with state-level experiences and awards.

- Sophia Schneider of Logan County is a member of the Illinois 4-H Youth Leadership Team, a select group that represents Illinois 4-H during important public events and implements several statewide 4-H activities.
- Sophia Schneider received an Illinois 4-H Leadership Scholarship, given to youth who have demonstrated and maintained a high standard of 4-H excellence and mastery.
- Members of the Middletown 4-H Club in Logan County were honored as Illinois State Club Award winners in the category of Community Service for their accomplishments during the previous year.
- Deanna Voyles, longtime Beason Ag 4-H Club leader and Logan County general projects superintendent, was inducted into the Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame. She has guided generations of youth with patience and commitment to helping them succeed.



Deanna Voyles



Nutrition Education

Extension helps schools plan nutritious meals for students

School nutrition professionals and food service staff must regularly earn continuing education credits, and Illinois Extension is perfectly positioned to provide research-based best practices for meal planning, nutrition education, food safety, and more.

In summer 2025, 29 local food service staff from area schools participated in professional development trainings led by local SNAP-Ed Educator Kayla Swaar and neighboring Educator Karina Moore. The ABCs of School Nutrition Learning Institutes, held in Jacksonville and Springfield, covered topics including Cultural Foods, Sugar, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points Policies, and Recruitment and Retention Practices. A representative from the Illinois State Board of Education's Child Nutrition Programs also presented at each training.

Participants indicated that they were excited to incorporate different ways for students to try new flavors and foods, and they appreciated the refresher on hazard analysis. Attendees also left with fresh ideas for maintaining and building inclusivity within their teams.

Staff who attended together from the same school district were able to have discussions and action-planning time during the trainings, which was of great benefit to them. Additionally, these training sessions were the perfect opportunity for local small, rural districts to connect with and learn from one another. This was an aspect the participants greatly appreciated, as there are not many opportunities to do so throughout the school year.



Learn more about local nutrition education activities extension.illinois.edu/LMS/nutrition-education



Local SNAP-Ed Community Worker Amy Hallmark teaches an OrganWise lesson on bone health to first graders at Jane Addams Elementary School.



26 Partnerships with schools, emergency food sites, and other organizations



409 Nutrition education classes



4 Policy, systems, and/or environmental changes adopted by partner organizations

Hunters feed their communities through new Extension program

One in 10 people in Illinois experiences hunger every day, including one in eight children. The Hunters Feeding Illinois program connects hunters, meat processors, and food pantries to bring lean protein to Illinois residents and families, providing a unique pathway to improve food insecurity.

The process is simple: hunters donate their harvested deer during hunting season, meat processors turn the deer into ground meat, and then food pantries receive ground venison to share with their guests. Along with access to this meat, food pantry guests receive support from Extension staff through recipe tastings, cooking examples, and storage information.

This program was new to Sangamon County in 2025 and saw success by partnering with Turasky Meats, Midstate Meat Company, and several local food pantries.





Thank you notes received from students at Blackhawk Elementary School who participated in a 4-H Kitchen Chemistry program.

2025 Impact Summary



32,637
Program attendance



1,137
Educational sessions



160
Local leaders who received Local Government Education resources



526
Volunteers



12,993
Volunteer hours



503
4-H club members

FY2025 Financial Report

Illinois Extension is funded through a combination of locally raised funds, county board allocations, and state and federal dollars, which are reinvested into the community through educational programming. This three-way funding partnership includes the State of Illinois, the USDA, and the local county boards.

Fiscal data does not include information related to SNAP-Ed salaries in the three counties, as this is funded by a federal grant from USDA.



	Percent	Amount	Source
	44%	\$354,122	Local
	35%	\$281,836	State
	21%	\$164,280	Federal
	Total	\$800,238	



	Percent	Amount	Source
	75%	\$600,136	Personnel
	25%	\$199,795	Non-Personnel
	Total	\$799,931	

Extension Council

The Extension Council is authorized by the University of Illinois Board of Trustees to cooperate with Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating, and financing programs designed to meet the needs, interests, and resources of local communities served.

Council Members

Zach Dixon Menard County	Charlotte Judd Logan County	Vera Small Sangamon County
Daniel Fulton Logan County	William Kennett Logan County	Emma Wankel Menard County
Kindall Helton Logan County	Samantha O'Neill Menard County	Jadyn Wheat Sangamon County
Steve Holliday Menard County	Elise Ransdell Sangamon County	Ellie Wrage Logan County
Clay Irwin Logan County	Sophia Schneider Logan County	

County Board Appointees

Keenan Leesman Logan County	Brad Miller Sangamon County
David Mendenhall Sangamon County	Ed Whitcomb, Jr. Menard County

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Melissa Bland
Office Support Assistant

Jennifer Fishburn
Horticulture Educator

Barbara Hedden
Clerical Extra Help

Shawna Stake-Charron
Office Support Assistant

Hunter Buchanan
Local Foods Program
Coordinator

Rachel Frost
Ag in the Classroom Extra Help

Shirley Schwing
Office Support Associate

Kayla Swaar
SNAP-Ed Educator

Terri Casey
County Director

Amanda Gray
Clerical Extra Help

Rachel Skelton
4-H Youth Development
Extra Help

Sarah Swaar
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Carissa Davis
4-H Youth Development
Educator

Amy Hallmark
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Stacie Skelton
4-H Youth Development
Program Coordinator

Reagen Tibbs
Commercial Agriculture
Educator

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ONLINE



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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.

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