



**Illinois Extension**

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

University of Illinois Extension Council Meeting for  
Madison, Monroe & St. Clair Counties  
2051 Lynch Avenue  
East St. Louis, IL 62204  
April 23, 2024

### Meeting Minutes

Staff Attendance: William Catalano, Amanie Abusaid, Rima Abusaid, Mekaela DeGuire, Elizabeth Gehl, Hannah Gravot, Karla Isaak, Elizabeth Levey, Gestavia Peeples, Shaneise Tally, and Chastidy Wilson.

Council Attendance: Kayla Berry, Landon Brooks, Emelie Nilges, and Lori Murphy

CALL TO ORDER – William called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS – All council members and staff provided a brief introduction.

MINUTES – Nothing from the last meeting's minutes needed to be reviewed.

OLD BUSINESS – There was no old business.

NEW BUSINESS – Laquitsha provided a JJK FAN Initiative overview and update via a pre-recorded video.

Elizabeth Levey gave information and updates on her 4-H Metro Visiting Outreach Associate position. Barriers include the attendance of youth at agencies outside of school and maintaining partnerships with agencies. It is rewarding when the kids apply the skills they learn to help them cope.

Council members suggested reaching out to local churches to recruit volunteers and having animals on the JJK FAN campus to allow the 4-H and agriculture teams to collaborate with the nutrition education programs.

Rima and Hannah gave an overview of the Illinois Nutrition Education Programs (INEP). Some of the community workers touched on their current and future programming.

INEP staff shared some barriers they face:

- Grocery store access since East St. Louis and surrounding communities are in a food desert. There is a current grant program for grocery stores to help keep them operating and/or opening them where there aren't any to meet the needs of community members struggling with access to fresh, healthy food.
- The community gardens struggle to have volunteers to maintain the gardens. They have been put in at schools to allow the students to work in them as part of their coursework. They conduct Farmers' Markets with the produce from the community gardens.
- We have lots of resources, but not a good way to leverage those resources to make a greater impact.
- The timing of programs and transportation to those programs for participants.
- Not restricting the INEP programs to low-income families only.
- Language barriers

INEP staff shared some of the rewarding aspects of their jobs:

- Feeling like you've made an impact in someone's life – pantry visitors, children through Organ Wise Guys, past EFNEP participants who share what they took away when they run into you even years later.
- Making a connection with those individuals that are stand-offish.

Let the conversation continue via email.

William thanked Emelie for her four years of service to the Extension Council.

ADJOURN – The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.