

Celebrating  
100 Years



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION

*Extending Knowledge* Changing Lives

## 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

*Serving DeWitt, Macon, & Piatt Counties*

**I**t is my pleasure to represent a staff of outstanding professionals who strive daily to positively impact the lives of the citizens of DeWitt, Macon & Piatt Counties. The staff does a superb job of developing and presenting educational programs that address issues in both urban and rural settings. There is not enough room in this brief format to report on the hundreds of individual programs that have been offered by the DeWitt, Macon & Piatt County staff this past year. Nor is there enough room to report on the substantial impact those programs had on thousands of individuals throughout the counties.

Enclosed in this year's Annual Report, you will find information regarding the areas in which our staff provides educational programming, descriptions of specific programs and the impact those programs have had on DeWitt, Macon & Piatt County residents of all ages.

We have enjoyed showcasing the success of University of Illinois Extension in our 100th Year Anniversary, and look forward to the extensive years ahead.

~Doug Harlan, County Director



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## THE NUMBERS

**Cloverbuds**  
**61 youth**

**SPIN Clubs**  
**52 youth**

**4-H Community Clubs**  
**188 youth**

**Short Term Programs**  
**502 youth**

# DeWitt County 4-H

## SENSATIONAL SUMMER PROGRAMS

This past summer, **134 youth participated in 9 different programs** throughout the summer. Youth gained basic life skills and knowledge they can utilize in the future by creating and doing hands-on programming. In the "Starry Night" visual arts workshop, **92% of the youth** surveyed said that they would take away the skills they learned in the workshop and use them in future projects. One participant said, *"I now know that light colors 'pop' out more when drawing pictures."* In the Incredible Edibles 4-H Spin Club, **100% of the participants** had a better understanding of meal portion size compared to **89%** in the pre-test.



## MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONCE

**14 DeWitt County 4-H members** were part of a woodworking workshop where they had an opportunity to create an "original" squirrel feeder utilizing basic woodworking and carpentry skills. Members learned about safety and the use of power tools in woodworking. 4-Hers had hands-on practice with using a belt sander, planer, drills, air nail gun, and multiple saws including a chop and band saw. The 4-H youth motto for the day was "measure twice, cut once" in creating their squirrel feeders.

**Eight adult volunteers** assisted the youth in creating their projects. Community support was provided by Lowe's Home Improvement Store in Decatur and Clinton FFA. 100% of the youth who participated completed the woodworking project. One youth participant said, *"This was a lot of fun. I never knew that I could make something like this."*

## 4-H HEALTH JAM

**122 fourth grade students** put on their sneakers and took part in the DeWitt County Health Jam sponsored by Clinton School District, YMCA, Dr. John Warner Hospital and University of Illinois Extension. During the two day field trip, youth participated in swimming, zumba, yoga, and leadership activities. On their tour of the hospital, the youth learned about nutrition, respiratory therapy, physical therapy, dental hygiene and much, much more! One teacher commented, *"I have heard older youth who have participated in the program come back and talk about their good memories of 4-H Health Jam. Health Jam lets them try things they never have been exposed to. I feel the hospital tour helps breakdown (fear) barriers that may have been there prior to their experience today."*

To see if the program was successful and that the youth sustained practice change, a follow-up survey was conducted of students who attended the year prior. **Out of 111 students surveyed, 81% said they are still exercising 60 minutes per day.** Additionally, 92% of the youth named at least one healthy food they continue to eat because of what they learned at 4-H Health Jam.





# HORTICULTURE & MASTER GARDENERS

## GREEN THUMB OPERATION

**52 limited resource families** participated in growing vegetable gardens in inner-city Decatur. Participants paid \$5.00 to secure a garden plot and are provided seed and plants. Seed and plants are purchased by the Extension office or are received as donations from the community.

Green Thumb Gardeners and Master Gardeners work together at the main Green Thumb Garden site to grow **40 different varieties of tomatoes** for the annual "Tomato Taste Panel" set each year for late summer.

After her first year as a Green Thumb Gardener in 2009, one elderly participant brought a check in the Extension office at the end of the year. She said the opportunity to have a garden saved her so much on her grocery bill, she just had to give something back to the **Green Thumb** program. Without a doubt, her check for \$40 was a sacrifice for her. She continues to donate back to the program to this day.



## TOMATO TASTE PANEL

Each year Master Gardeners and Green Thumb Gardeners grow tomatoes for the taste panel at their own homes or in various locations across the Decatur area. Each year approximately **40 different varieties** are grown. A new collaboration with Decatur Park District allowed for efficient production of seedlings of all the varieties and extra tomato seedlings were offered for sale at the annual Master Gardener Plant Sale in 2013.

Master Gardeners hosted the 8th Annual Tomato Taste Panel on September 12, 2013. **60 people** were in attendance and they tasted 40 different varieties of heirloom and hybrid tomatoes. Participants also enjoyed recipes prepared with tomatoes provided by Master Gardeners along with Nutrition and Wellness Educator, Caitlin Huth. Plans for 2014 include a new variety of tomatoes along with an increase to 50 different varieties.

## GARDENING INSIGHTS

An annual education event hosted by Macon County Master Gardeners, Gardening Insights provides classes for gardeners of all ages and skill levels. Attendees chose **4 classes from the 13** offered along with hearing keynote speaker, Melinda Myers. Topics ranged from hands-on workshops in flower arranging, growing microgreens and succulent planters to lectures on native grasses, horticultural photography and seed starting. This annual educational event saw a **50% increase** in attendance over 2013 with **173 people attending**.

## EARTH DAY IN CLINTON

For the second year in a row horticulture staff participated in Earth Day activities at Lincoln School in Clinton. Over **280 second and third grade students** participated in the activities. Throughout the day, the youth learned about giving back to the earth in fun and easy ways. Additionally, students had an opportunity to do hands-on learning by creating a **Grow Necklace**. The horticulture staff looks forward to more exciting events with Clinton schools and specifically working with school district teachers on horticulture curriculum in the classroom.

## MASTER GARDENERS

- ◆ In 2013, Macon County Master Gardeners contributed **6,058 hours** of volunteer time to community education projects. This equates to over **\$134,124.12 dollars** worth of service to Macon County.
- ◆ While small, but very mighty, the Piatt County Master Gardeners had **12 volunteers** contribute over **615 hours** to the community. Based on the Independent Sector's most recent numbers, this equates to **\$13,616.10 dollars** worth of service to the Piatt County community.
- ◆ Extension staff continues to actively recruit potential Master Gardener volunteers in DeWitt County. Upcoming programs with the Vespasian Warner library will hopefully ignite interest in the DeWitt County Program.

## GARDENER'S DAY

A new collaboration with Allerton Park and University of Illinois Extension provided Piatt County residents with the opportunity to be a part of Gardener's Day. In it's inaugural year, **19 individuals participated** in the event. The day featured 3 talks on evergreens, poisonous plants, and herbs. For 2014, the event centered around a "Grow Your Own" theme and attracted **35 participants**, maxing out the available space. Plans for 2015 are well underway with the possibility of increasing the facility size to accommodate a greater number of program participants.



# MACON



## PLEDGING LARGER SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITY

1

### TEENS AS TEACHERS

The **Maroa Livestock 4-H Club** teen members have expanded the scope of their club to lead activities for 5-7 year olds at each meeting. Focusing on ag-science concepts, the teens serve as role models, as well as sharing new learning opportunities with the youth.

2

### ROBOTICS OUTREACH

The **RoboStorms 4-H Club** has led over **42 workshops**, teaching youth and adults about the science of robotics and technology. Their outreach efforts have earned them awards in their **FIRST** competitions.

3

### ADOPT-A-SOLDIER

The **Forsyth Fantastics 4-H Club** has created a new program to support our troops overseas. Each month the club sends **care packages to soldiers** from our community. Their program has caught on and has been replicated by other groups in the community.

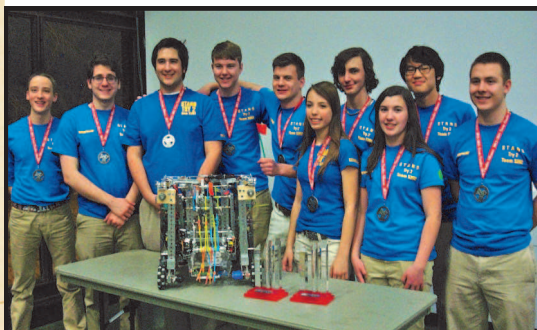
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### THINKING GREEN

The **Long Creek Critters 4-H Club** has taken on the challenge of **beautifying the Mt. Zion Library** by creating and maintaining flower beds around the facility. Their outreach has created a sustainable green environment for the community to enjoy throughout the year.

In 2013, Macon County 4-H reached 4,223 youth in 74 4-H clubs and groups with over 428 volunteers. Showing constant growth, 13% more youth were enrolled in 4-H clubs compared to the previous year.

## INSPIRING ONE MILLION SCIENTISTS & IDEAS



Macon County 4-H has inspired a generation of youth to get excited, not just about science, but also about robotics. Last year, **111 4-Hers** in Macon County participated in the 4-H Robotics programs including: **FIRST LEGO League**, **FIRST Tech Challenge**, **FIRST Robotics Competition**, and **Illinois 4-H Robotics Competition**.

4-H is anticipating the next generation of technology and ideas. With a grant from the Illinois 4-H Foundation, Macon County 4-H purchased a **3-D Printer** for use by 4-H members. Our 4-H Try To Understand Team is printing wheels for their award winning robot as they participate in the **FIRST Super Regional Competition**. The 3-D Printer, along with Macon County 4-H, will be showcased at the 2014 Decatur Business Expo.

## STEM-READY WORKFORCE

There is a low percentage of scientists in America. Recognizing this problem, 4-H Science programs have actively sought to spark an early interest in science education and related careers by providing exciting and approachable, hands-on learning experiences.

### *Science Excited!*

Macon County 4-H partnered with the Decatur Public Schools gifted programs to lead a 4-session after school science program.

After attending the program:  
~ 90% reported that science is useful in solving everyday problems.

~ 80% think science, engineering and technology will be important to their future.

~ 60% do more science-related activities that are not for schoolwork after attending Science Excited!



## BUILDING A HEALTHIER MACON COUNTY

Each year, **30 4-H teens** lead a revolution of health and nutrition during the Decatur Public Schools summer school program.

Their program is called **SNAP: Super Nutrition Activity Playground**. The teens run a 4-day camp teaching nutrition and health, reaching almost **400 youth**. While the students at camp are learning new skills, more importantly **teen leadership skills** develop through this program. Last year researchers from University of Illinois included SNAP! in an independent research project looking at Positive Youth Development Programs.

SNAP! Junior Leaders reported that they:

- Learn responsibility and how to deal with challenging tasks.
- Have positive relationships with peers that contributed to and reinforced their work and learning.





### FARM PROGRESS SHOW SITE COVER CROP DEMONSTRATION

**59 farmers and landowners** attended the “Cover Crops-Protect You’re A\$\$ets!!” meeting focusing on the importance of cover crops to protecting soil and water quality, and emphasizing the money saving benefits of these crops to farmers. New research on the possible use of fall planted cover crops to hold fall applied fertilizer in the soil was presented by Dr. Shalamar Armstrong and Corey Lacey of Illinois State University. The **collaborative approach** of the two universities provided a wealth of information to farmers and landowners from throughout the State of Illinois.

### ASPIRING FARMERS

Is entrepreneurial farming for me? This question was on the minds of the **17 participants** who participated in the 2013 “Is Entrepreneurial Farming for You?” workshop hosted by our unit in early August. The youth participant for the day was an active member of the meeting discussing future ideas for his “egg route.” Participants not only enjoyed learning about entrepreneurial farming, but they also were treated to a catered meal that was prepared with all **locally grown foods**.

### STEWARDSHIP DAY

**152 DeWitt County 5th graders** participated in our “Importance of the Illinois Prairie” workshop during the DeWitt County Stewardship day at Weldon Springs State Park.



## WHAT’S THE BUZZ? A COMMUNITY’S PASSION FOR BEES



Community members of our counties are a “buzz” with the local programming that is focusing on raising bees, beekeeping, and the benefits of honey. **11 people** attended the first program entitled “Tea and Honey with a Beekeeper.” This program focused on how a first timer should go about establishing a colony of bees. Local beekeeper and Master Naturalist, Betty Geneser, discussed the “ins and outs” of backyard beekeeping.

With the outpouring of requests for a second class, program collaboration with our Nutrition Educator, brought back **9 community members** to learn about the nutritional value and health benefits of honey. Those in attendance also had an opportunity to see a **hands-on extraction** of honey from a hive frame.

## Master Naturalists 29 VOLUNTEERS 1154.50 HOURS

2013 brought **13 new Master Naturalist recruits** who successfully completed the 12 weeks of training. Each of the weekly lessons focused on a different topic relevant to environmental issues, Illinois natural resources and how to become an engaged environmental steward. One of those newest graduates, Katie Finch commented, *“I learned a lot more about our local environment than I had originally expected.”*



There are now **29 active and intern Master Naturalists**, who have logged in more than **1154.50 hours** of volunteer time in our communities in the past year. Our program would not be possible without the assistance of several local partners that include: Decatur Park District and Macon County Conservation District who help instruct, provide meeting spaces, and refreshments.

### Illinois Cottage Food Act

“Garden Gates to Dinner Plates” was presented to **25 attendees**. The program informs interested individuals about the cottage food act and what foods can be processed in the home kitchen for sale at farmers’ markets under this act. A pre/post test was given which showcased a **60% increase in food act knowledge**.

### Piatt County Tillage Day

**43 farmers** attended the Piatt County Tillage Day which presented research on the importance of tillage management with regard to soil erosion, water quality, and sustainability. Piatt County is in the Lake Decatur watershed, which is an IEPA priority watershed.



# Piatt County 4-H



## MAD SCIENCE SPIN CLUB

**13 youth** participated in the 2013 Mad Science SPIN Club during the summer. 4-H members learned about the scientific method, which they put to use with hands-on experiments. Keeping a scientific journal throughout the six session program, students were left wondering even more about science. **95% of the members** surveyed said they hadn't thought that science could be so much fun and that would make them want to try new experiments in the future.

One participant commented, *"I thought science was just stuff to learn in school. This was stuff we can do at home and it was actually fun!"*

Based on the results of the pre and post tests, **85% of the participants** in the science spin club had an understanding of an experimental hypothesis compared to **100% at the end** of the Mad Science 4-H SPIN Club.



## WELCOME TO THE REAL WORLD

**98 students** encompassing **3 Piatt County High Schools** took part in Welcome to the Real World. During the program, students chose a career, were given a salary, and paid bills by writing checks from their checkbook. Thanks to over **21 volunteers**, students went through numerous stations writing checks and paying bills. One adult volunteer stated, *"I am so glad we are doing this. It is good for the students to see where money goes and why their parents may not always have the money for things they want to buy."*

Student evaluations showed that prior to the program **only 51% knew how to balance a checkbook compared to 97% by the end of the program.** One Cerro Gordo student commented, *"I was shocked about what things really cost when I had to pay for them myself."*



## THE NUMBERS

**Cloverbuds  
19 youth**

**SPIN Clubs  
& Community Clubs  
218 youth**

**Short Term Programs  
275 youth**

## 4-H HEALTH JAM BLUE RIDGE DISTRICT

From talking about smoking to hospital tours to learning about living a healthier lifestyle with fun activities, 4th and 5th grade students from **Mansfield Elementary** participated in the 2013 Piatt County Health Jam. **130 students** leaped into action to participate in a 2 day field trip and 8 weeks of classroom follow-up. During this time, students learned about healthy lifestyles, good nutrition, physical fitness, and health related careers. **92% of the teachers surveyed strongly agreed that 4-H Health Jam actively engaged their students in learning about healthy eating and physical activity.**

## PIATT COUNTY SPIN CLUBS

1

### BAS ART SPIN CLUB

Members in the BAS Art Club are learning about art theory and different styles of art. They have the opportunity to learn a variety of techniques and art media with hands-on experience in creating their own art work. This club compliments school curriculum which has been forced to cut funding for the arts.

2

### CREATIVE WRITING SPIN CLUB

Monticello High School Juniors & Seniors had the opportunity to explore poetry and prose over a 6 week period. The students were challenged to write an original work which they performed at an open reading at a local coffee shop.

3

### SEWING SPIN CLUB

Youth had the opportunity to learn and master many basic sewing skills. Each youth/adult team was able to have their own sewing machine for the program. This opportunity allowed for the youth to have constant adult reinforcement, demonstration, and interaction.

4

### SUMMER 4-H PROGRAMS

**92 youth** participated in 11 different summer programs offered through Piatt County 4-H. **The 2013 program targeted new audiences and almost 73% of the participants were non 4-Hers.** Twenty-four youth participated in the cooking classes, and **95% said** they would try other cultural cuisines and food in the future.







# Nutrition & Wellness

## INCREDIBLE EDIBLES IN DEWITT COUNTY

The Incredible Edibles 4-H SPIN Club educated **9 youth** over 6 days on nutritious eating, food science, snack/meal preparation, and food purchasing skills. Youth learned about **MyPlate** for meal planning and nutritious eating, changed food pigment colors related to cooking methods, prepared their own snacks and lunch, and visited a farmer's market and grocery store to learn about available foods and reading food labels. From pre/post test evaluations, youth identified food groups of an example meal (**from 37% to 57% correct**), identified portion sizes of foods (**from 67% to 86% correct**) and determined pigment changes (**from 44% to 71%**).



## SERVE IT SAFELY

**Eleven representatives** from a variety of organizations and volunteer groups attended Serve it Safely in Piatt County. Participants learned ideal food safety when serving and selling food at events, practiced proper hand washing, and prepared a sanitation solution. All participants reported that as a result of attending the class, **they plan to stress hand washing for their volunteers and provide other training**, cool foods more safely, and monitor how refrigerators are stocked to ensure food safety.

## MEALS FOR A HEALTHY HEART

In Macon County, **6 adults** attended the 2-part series Meals for a Healthy Heart to learn ways to improve blood pressure and cholesterol, practice ordering for heart health when dining out, and reading food labels to pick the most heart-healthy choices. As a result of attending the series, participants reported a better understanding of how fat and sodium impact heart health and reported plans to read food labels more closely and prepare demonstrated recipes.

## WHOA AND GO FOODS

Just over **750 Decatur area preschoolers** participate in monthly lessons on eating healthy. Youth learn different examples of whoa (chocolate milk) and go (white milk) foods so that they can eat healthier.

## EATING SMART, BEING ACTIVE

Each month **20 mothers from Phoenix Academy and 63 people from Macon Resources** learn about the importance of healthy snacks, comparison shopping, and reading food labels.

## FOOD FORUMS

Close to **560 individuals** throughout 2013 took part in food forums at the weekly Decatur area food pantries. From learning to cook with what's on hand to fruits that are in season, individuals learn a little bit more about stretching their food dollar.

## KIRBY'S KITCHEN

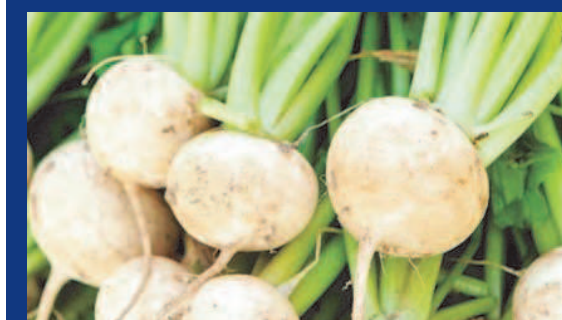
The monthly Kirby's Kitchen cooking series in Piatt County had its highest attendance of the year in November with **10 adults**, including participants from past classes. Participants learned about and tasted a variety of autumn foods (brussel sprouts, cranberries, sweet potatoes, and winter squash) before viewing recipe demonstrations and tasting a healthy Thanksgiving-inspired meal using all the autumn foods. New participants reported attending the class to **try new foods and learn more about healthy and nutritious foods**.

## GARDEN GATES TO DINNER PLATES

Illinois allows select jams and baked goods to be sold at farmer's markets through Cottage Food Law. **Twenty-five adults** attended the class From Garden Gates to Dinner Plates to learn the specifics of the law, including steps to water-bath canning and good agricultural practices. More than 9% agreed the information learned would be helpful in their future operations. **From pre/post testing, participants identified different allowances of the law (from 40% to 90% correct)**.

## YES YOU CAN!

**15 adults** attended each class in a 4-part series on pressure canning, water bath canning, freezing/drying, and cooking from the pantry. In a partnership with the gardening group DIGG (Decatur is Growing Gardeners), participants learned safe food preservation techniques and money-saving cooking skills. More than 90% of participants indicated intentions to use food preservation methods at home. Around 75% of participants felt confident to try food preservation at home, while the remaining 25% indicated a desire to get further instruction before preserving at home. **More than 90% stated they could still eat healthily on a budget and felt confident they could create meals from items in their pantry.**



*DeWitt, Macon, & Piatt*  
**Extension  
 Council**

*The Extension Council participates in identifying local needs, providing guidance in programming, and program evaluation.*

- Karen Allen
- Emily Bakken
- Megan Barth
- Bill Buechsenschuetz
- Scott Burnsmier
- Judy Coffey
- Susan Cooper
- Pete Daughtery
- Thomas Dobson
- Julie Glawe
- Denny Hill
- Randy Keith
- Sharon Middleton
- Laura Miller
- Kathleen Piatt
- Vasuda Pinnamaraju
- Theodore Shambaugh
- Alison Skelton
- Rosalie Summers
- Julia Taraszewski
- Jan Wenke

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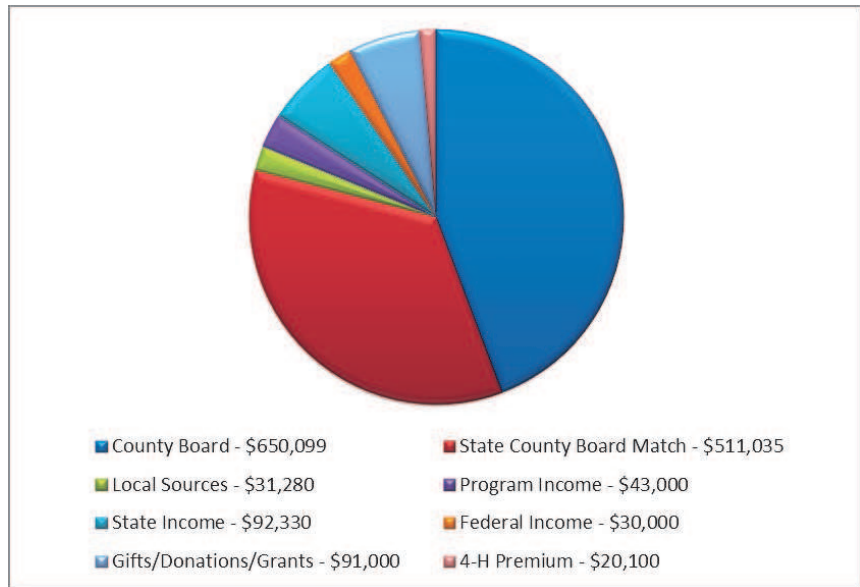
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**EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE, CHANGING LIVES**

Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future.

**DeWitt, Macon, & Piatt Counties  
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# Community Partners & Sponsors

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Annual Report **2013**

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Clinton YMCA  
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Decatur Park District  
Decatur Police Department  
Decatur Public Library  
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Decatur Tribune  
DeWitt Human Resources Center  
DeWitt County 4-H Foundation  
DeWitt County Constitution  
DeWitt County HCE  
DeWitt County NRCS  
DeWitt County SWCD

DeWitt County Housing  
DeWitt Friendship Center  
DeWitt/Piatt Health Department  
DIGG  
DMH Wellness Center  
DOVE  
Faith in Action  
Farm Progress Show  
Farmer City Library  
Farmer City School District  
Forsyth Public Library  
Garden Path  
Greater Decatur YMCA  
Heart of Sangamon  
Heartland Region  
Herald & Review  
IAHCE  
Illinois Chapter of the NRA  
Illinois Children's Museum  
Coalition for Community Service  
Illinois 4-H Foundation  
John Warner Hospital  
Leroy/Farmer City Newspaper  
Kirby Medical Center  
Macon County 4-H Foundation  
Macon County ACHIEVE  
Macon County Conservation  
Macon County Fairgrounds  
Macon County Farm Bureau  
Macon County HCE  
Macon County NRCS  
Macon County Public Health  
Macon County Senior Center  
Macon County Sheriff's Office  
Macon County SWCD  
Macon Health Department  
Mansfield School District  
Maroa-Forsyth Public Schools  
Maroa Park Program

Maroa Public Library  
Monticello Community Building  
Monticello Farmer's Market  
Monticello - First Christian  
Monticello Rotary  
Monticello School District  
Mount Zion Public Schools  
Mount Zion Region News  
Mount Zion Recreation Dept.  
Obesity Prevention Coalition  
Partners in Education  
Piatt County 4-H Foundation  
Piatt County Farm Bureau  
Piatt County HCE  
Piatt County Journal Republic  
Piatt County Nursing Home  
Piatt County NRCS  
Piatt County SWCD  
Piatt Mental Health  
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WAND TV  
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YMCA



# Meet Our Staff:

## *Committed to Your Community*

### *County Director*

**Doug Harlan - Serving DeWitt, Macon & Piatt Counties**

### *Educators*

**Sherry Fulton - 4-H Youth Development**

**Douglas Gucker - Local Food Systems and Small Farms**

**Caitlin Huth - Nutrition and Wellness**

**Amy Leman - 4-H Youth Development Metro**

**Jennifer Schultz-Nelson - Horticulture**



### *Program Coordinators*

**Beth Allhands - Macon County Master Gardeners**

**Dena Hyde - 4-H SPIN Clubs**

**Myla Munro-Ringler - Agriculture**

**Mindy Peterson-Lindsey - Marketing**

**Samantha Rusk - Macon County 4-H Youth Development**

**Courtney Stewart - 4-H Youth Development, Metro**

**Karyn Traum - Horticulture**



### *Community Workers*

**Kim Gibbons - DeWitt County 4-H Youth Development**

**Susan Houska - Piatt County 4-H Youth Development**

**Anita Tyus - SNAP Education, Macon County**

### *Work Program Participants*

**Charlotte Cook - SNAP Education, Macon County**

**Beverly Minor - SNAP Education, Macon County**



### *Office Support Specialist*

**Peggy Mechling - Macon County**

### *Office Support Associate*

**Diana Leischner - Piatt County**

### *Office Support Assistant*

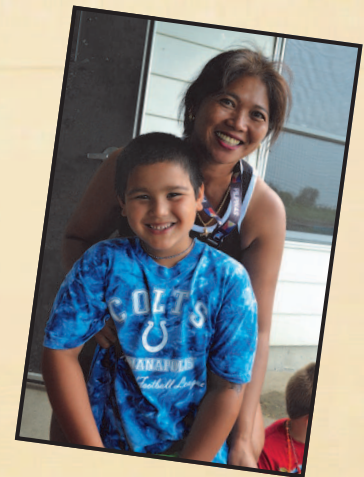
**Jody Bobbitt - Macon County**

**Lindsey Burden - DeWitt County**

**Diane Dowd - Macon County**

**Lynda Hryhorysak - Macon County**

**Diana Tibbs - DeWitt County**



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*If you need reasonable accommodation to participate in this program, please contact the extension office.*