



# 2016 Annual Report

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION  
SERVING COOK COUNTY



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
EXTENSION



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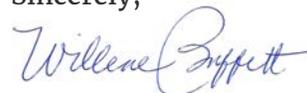


## A Note from Our Director

Dear Friends,

The Extension personnel and I achieved another year in programs for residents of Chicago and suburban Cook County. We measured the success of programs by the comments, support, and impact they provide in your lives. Admittedly, we faced our fair share of challenges over the course of the year, but our successes always outshone our disappointments. This year, more than 235,000 individuals participated in numerous settings for educational programs. Such offerings extended to active seniors, youth explorations in the Forest Preserves, youth at Space camp, robotic competitions, WIC cooking schools, Corner grocery store food demonstrations, urban farmer trainings, teacher summer trainings, and newly implemented Next Generation Science Standards intense trainings for a cohort of teachers. Over this very busy year, Extension extended knowledge to change lives for residents of Chicago and suburban Cook County. I hope you will enjoy catching up with our team as you browse our annual report, and if you would like to connect with us more, you can always visit us on our website and follow us on social media.

Sincerely,



Willene Buffett  
Cook County Director



*“Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.”*

*-Arthur Ashe*



## Who We Are

Cook County Extension is comprised of 64 individuals from educators and program coordinators, to community workers and support staff. In addition, Cook County extension works with hundreds of dedicated volunteers throughout the county who help make the programming Extension offers possible.

## Who We Serve

Extension reaches individuals living throughout Cook County, both in Chicago and its many suburbs. Extension serves both men and women of all ages and ethnicities.

## How We Serve

Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future. U of I Extension in Cook County offers educational programs in five broad areas:

- ▶ Protecting and Appreciating the Environment
- ▶ Growing and Accessing Adequate Food to Prevent Hunger
- ▶ Developing a Healthy Lifestyle
- ▶ Workforce Preparedness
- ▶ Positive Youth Development

## Our Partners

The organizations that Extension works with connect our dedicated staff with Cook County residents everyday. Without them, Extension would not have the reach it does. This year, Extension worked with 235 businesses, schools, clubs, and other organizations to help build a better future, together.

## Funding

The Cook County unit weathered deep financial challenges during the midst of the state budget uncertainties for 2016 fiscal year. However, despite the uncertainties over the state funding, the cost saving efforts we established allowed the continual implementation and delivery of programs to the residents. We did receive federal funding and local sources of funds.



- 77% Wages
- 12% Operating Expenses
- 11% Leases

## Maywood Youth Peace Garden

Maywood Youth Mentoring Leader Barbara Cole worked with Master Gardeners to design and build a perennial garden on a vacant lot at Madison Street and 17th Avenue in Maywood. Although the group had planted a few perennials in the past, the lot had largely been overgrown by weeds over the past few years. In March 2016, a design was submitted by Master Gardener Olga DeSio with the guidance of Horticulture Educator Kim Ellson of North Cook County Extension. Maywood youth and adults alike participated in site clean up, soil preparation, and planting days in spring and early summer. Local gardeners donated most of the 100+ plants in garden. Even the local fire department helped by filling rain barrels with water on a regular basis throughout the summer!



The site of the garden before work began was overgrown with weeds and neglected.

The resulting gardens have been nothing short of spectacular. Although Master Gardeners visit the site on a periodic basis, Ms. Cole and youth from the area carefully maintain each of the five perennial beds. With a successful year under their belts, they are looking forward to expanding the garden in 2017!



Maywood Youth Peace Garden after work was completed. An asset to the area!

## Master Gardener & Master Naturalist Statistics



**470**  
Master Gardeners



**47**  
New Master Gardeners in 2016



**25,203**  
Master Gardeners Hours  
Logged



**83**  
Master Naturalists



**24**  
New Master Naturalists  
in 2016



**4,848**  
Master Naturalist  
Hours Logged



**57k+**  
Total Direct Contacts  
(staff contacts included)

## Cook County Karma Garden

In 2013, Extension partnered with the Cook County Temporary Juvenile Detention Center and the Nancy B. Jefferson Alternative School to develop the “Karma Garden.” On the rooftop of the detention center, more than 100 earthboxes, smart pots and containers are planted each season with a variety vegetables, herbs and fruit. Youth awaiting trial or sentencing plant and maintain the garden, many of whom have never grown anything before.

**The Karma Garden produced 500 Lbs. of produce for donation in 2016.**

Chicago Public School teachers worked to integrate the garden into their classroom curriculums. During the growing season Chicago Master Gardeners Mary Harkenrider, Joan Davis, Ruth Fast and University of Illinois Extension horticulture coordinator, Valerie Kehoe met twice weekly with youth providing hands-on activities and technical assistance.



The community garden at Ingalls Memorial Hospital

## Ingalls Memorial Hospital Community Garden

Harvey, Illinois has been identified by the USDA as a food desert with low income residents (36.4% poverty rate) that have low vehicle access. In addition, minority populations are high: 75.8% African American and 19% Hispanic (U.S. Census, 2010). These populations have been identified as underserved audiences in South Cook County. In response to this issue, Horticulture Educator, Nancy Kreith and South Cook Master Gardeners partnered with Ingalls Memorial Hospital in Harvey to implement a community garden.

Since Kreith’s involvement with the garden, 32 dietetic staff and volunteers have received vegetable gardening training and field guidance, 52 community center youth have been engaged in programming, and three food pantries (serving an average of 500 individuals weekly) have received over 685 pounds of fresh produce donations. The success of the garden has led to hospital administration generating funding for 2017 to expand the garden by nearly three times its size.

## Illinois Nutrition Education Program

### FIGHTING OBESITY IN COOK COUNTY

Research indicates that nearly 65 percent of adults are either overweight or obese and nearly a third of all children are obese. Among those most affected by this epidemic are those living in food insecure communities. In Cook County, the food insecurity rate is estimated to be 15.6% with approximately 807,690 food insecure individuals.

### WHAT'S BEING DONE?

Among the best programs developed to fight obesity is the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). EFNEP combats obesity by attacking nutritional concerns among low-income populations. Through the program, individuals and families learn to improve their diets and increase physical activity. It also helps eliminate societal barriers to healthier choices by teaching lessons on how to shop for food, plan nutritious meals for your family, and manage the food dollar.

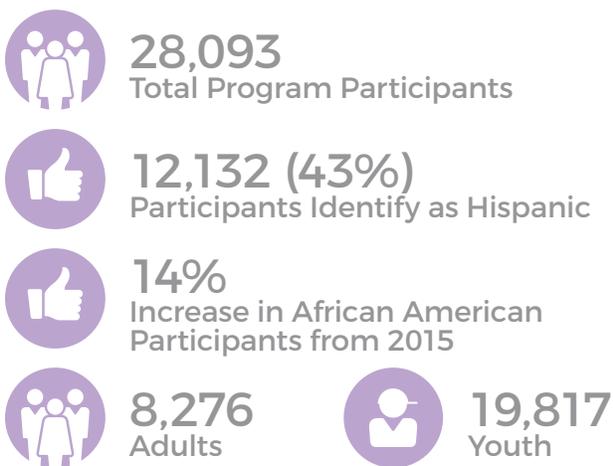
In 2016, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) reached 3,857 family members with an enrollment of 935 participants. More than two-thirds of participants received a certificate of completion and a significant majority noted positive changes in behavior regarding nutrition.

Reaching out to educate youth about food management and nutrition is critical to helping promote a healthy, food secure future. In 2016, EFNEP reached 1,310 youth amongst 72 youth groups. 90% of participants graduated from the program and amongst those over three-quarters of children and youth surveyed in all grades (K – 12) improved their abilities to choose foods according to the Federal Dietary Recommendations.

86% of participants showed improvement in one or more food resource management areas through EFNEP programming.

### Empowering with Knowledge

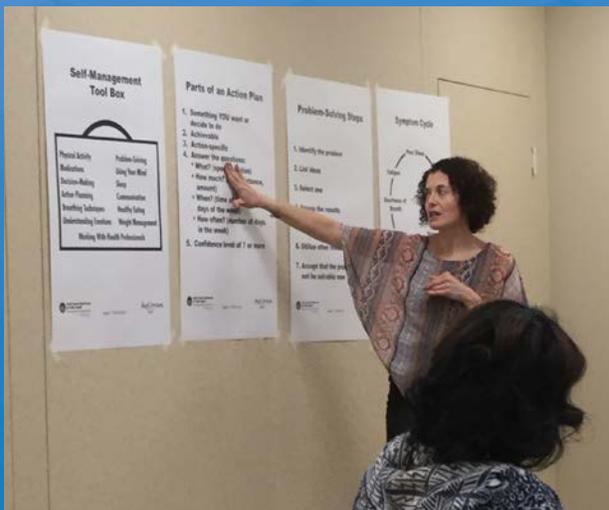
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-ED) seeks to help SNAP eligible people on a limited budget make healthy food choices and choose physically active lifestyles. The SNAP-ED program reaches people where they are in their communities with interactive classes and activity stations, and by working towards policy, systems, and environmental changes to encourage healthier behaviors. In 2016, SNAP-ED programming reached a total of 28,093 individuals. To make this happen, Extension partnered with the many communities of Cook County to reach out to families at over 150 different contact sites.



## Taking Charge of Your Health in Cook County

Take Charge of Your Health is an evidence-based Chronic Disease Self-Management Program for people with chronic diseases and their caregivers. Developed by Dr. Kate Lorig of Stanford University and licensed to Extension for dissemination, Take Charge of Your Health is a proven series of six sessions discussing:

- ▶ Coping with fatigue, frustration, and isolation related to health conditions.
- ▶ Exercising to maintain and improve strength and flexibility.
- ▶ Using medications.
- ▶ Communicating with family, friends, and health professionals.
- ▶ Practicing good nutrition.
- ▶ Evaluating new treatment options.



Extension Educator Michele Crawford Teaching a Take Charge of Your Health workshop.

## Healthy Relationships for Diverse Learners

It is understood that young people with disabilities are far more vulnerable to sexual abuse than are their peers— especially those with developmental disabilities. This series focuses on high school students on the autism spectrum and includes lessons

on communication and conflict resolution, decision-making, dating abuse and breaking up, and the role of technology in healthy relationships. All lessons align with the National Sexuality Education Standards for Healthy Relationships for 9-12th grade students. Throughout the four sessions, the thirty-five enrolled students participated in group discussions as well as a number of activities including role-play, brainstorming and think-pair-share. Post-class evaluations demonstrate over half the students agree they can recognize signs of abuse in a relationship, and the majority of students agree they feel confident in resisting peer pressure to sext.

## PRIDE Boys Empowerment Program

The Community Health team, alongside the Social and Emotional Learning team, worked this year with young boys in Cook County to educate them about physical, social, and emotional health as well as prepare them for young adulthood. The PRIDE Boys empowerment program took place over the course of three sessions with boys ranging in age from 8 to 13 learning about social and family relationships, body image concerns, responsible decision making and more. Ninety percent of the participants reported receiving helpful information from the PRIDE program.



PRIDE graduates showing off their certificates



## INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE THROUGH 4-H

The 4-H team kept busy in 2016 with multiple generous grants focused on robotics, health, and nutrition for youth countywide. The grants and programming are as follows.

### U.S. Cellular

U.S. Cellular provided a generous \$15,000 for STEM programs and activities. From this grant, Cook County 4-H youth participated in a 4K 4-H Walk-Run at USC headquarters in April, as well as having fun at the National Youth Science Day, pictured above. Additional special events were hosted by USC at the National Headquarters office. More than 3,000 youth had the opportunity to participate in programming sponsored by U.S. Cellular in 2016.

### Altria

Altria provided funding for two programs: "Growing 4-H Science" and "Health Rocks". "Growing 4-H Science" focuses on piquing the interest of middle school youth in the subjects of science, robotics, gardening, and technology. In 2016, Cook County had 200 youth participants and 17 adult volunteers

for this program. "Health Rocks" is a healthy living program aimed at 8-16 year olds with the goal of reducing tobacco, alcohol and drug use in youth.

### Target Food Smart Families

The Target 4-H Food Smart Families grant worked towards empowering underserved youth and their families to take charge of their food choices, cooking skills, and food budget management strategies in 2016. Through this grant program, 375 families have been reached so far. This program is ongoing and will continue into 2017.

**Over 7,500 youth  
directly and indirectly  
participated in 4-H  
programs, activities  
and events in 2016.**



Extension Educator Zack Grant teaching trainees at the Growing Solutions farm in Chicago, IL

## Local Food Systems and Small Farms

### LEARNING TO FARM IN URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

In November of 2016, the LFSSF team finished a pilot cohort for the new Master Urban Farmer Training Program (MUFTP). The MUFTP program was designed based on similar Extension programs in other urban areas seeking to train potential urban agriculture entrepreneurs with the hard skills they need to successfully start their own enterprise in the growing urban agriculture field. The initial MUFTP pilot saw 35 participants graduate from the 10-week pilot program. The pilot was a success and, on average, saw a 355% increase week-to-week in participants reporting a large knowledge gain after each module. A second cohort will run in early 2017 and will focus on accommodating the need for more specific skill concentration and more one-on-one training.

### Spotlighting Success

A Sustainable Agriculture Education (SAGE) collaboration between two MUFTP participants resulted in a SAGE educational fundraiser which raised over \$600 for The Center in Palos Park!

My participation and completion of the Master Urban Farming Training Program has provided me with the resources to operate my local farming operation more productively, efficiently, and with great hopes more profitably. The friendships I developed at MUFTP will last a lifetime. I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to participate in the Master Urban Farming Training Program and I look forward to future programs.

**VERONICA PORTER,  
VETERANS VICTORY FARM**



## STEM Teacher Professional Development

Cook County has over 1900 schools in 200 districts, including Chicago Public Schools—one of the largest school districts in the nation. STEM careers are growing at a staggering rate, with over 1 million new positions projected to be added by 2020. Of the 20 fastest growing careers, 15 require a math or science background.

However, Cook County and Illinois at large lag behind much of the nation in preparing our youth for the future. To help address this deficit, Extension has worked to bring much needed Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math based educational training to professional educators across the county. Through the Teacher Professional Development Training program, Extension has reached over 1400 teachers through more than 100 workshops this year alone.

**The activities I have learned in the workshops have helped me to “release” my students more. They are more independent, which is amazing.**

**TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANT**

These workshops help teachers understand and implement Next Generation Science Standards and Common Core State Standards in Math in the classroom. Since 2010, the number of workshops hosted by the Cook County STEM team has more than tripled, and

**Over 1,400 teachers were reached through more than 100 professional development workshops in 2016.**



Extension Educator Sue Gasper assisting teachers during a Professional Development workshop

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- 35% African American
- 32% Hispanic
- 27% Caucasian
- 4% Other
- 2% Asian

*Demographic breakdown for students indirectly reached through professional development teachers from the last two years. 68% of these individuals are low income.*

continues to grow year-on-year. The demand for continued training amongst professional educators shows no sign of slowing, and 2016 was Extension's busiest year yet. Cook County STEM put on over 100 professional development sessions during the program year. The STEM team looks forward to growing the professional development program in 2017 and beyond.

## Extension Blasts Off to Space Camp

This year, the STEM team selected another group of middle school age students from Cook County to attend the Space Academy program in Huntsville, Alabama. Participants attended multiple sessions hosted by STEM educators in preparation for the camp, learning background information for the various science, engineering, and design projects through the program.



Once again a highly sought opportunity, many applicants vied for a spot on the all-expenses paid trip where students learned about the history of space exploration, competed against other teams across the world, and learned how to problem solve like astronauts in multiple space mission scenarios. The Space Academy program has more than 650,000 alumni from all 50 states and 65 nations around the world, and inspires thousands of young adults to pursue STEM classes and fields of

education each year. From the Extension cohort, 94% and 81% of campers indicated that they wanted to pursue careers in science and engineering, respectively, after attending camp. Additionally, participants indicated an overall increase in curiosity and knowledge in the subject areas of science, engineering, physics, and space.

**94% plan to pursue a career in science, and 81% in engineering after attending Space Academy.**



Space Camp participants experiencing what it's like to walk on the moon in the 1/6 gravity chair in Huntsville, AL.

## Social & Emotional Learning

**In 2016, the SEL team expanded Extension's reach in Cook County with the launch of new initiatives in three categories: programming for teachers, the workforce, and parents.**

### Programming for Teachers

Professional development training focuses on working with teachers to create a positive learning environment, and Project-based Learning (PBL) builds upon that foundation. PBL's purpose is to unleash the student's potential by creating a teacher guided, but student-driven space that values and encourages collaboration, innovation, and creative problem solving. Within that space, students have agency to apply their academic knowledge and life experience to solve problems that they think are important with projects that they create.

### Programming for Parents

The SEL Parent Circle, a collaborative learning experience for parent groups in Cook County, offers a supportive environment for parents to engage in critical dialogue and activities as they enhance their personal development and their capacity to contribute to their children's academic, social, and emotional development.

**I have a vision and a plan now to help my kids succeed.**  
**BURKE ELEMENTARY, PARENT CIRCLE PARTICIPANT**

### Programming for the Workforce

The focus of traditional workforce development programs is helping individuals develop the hard skills needed to secure employment. The Facing What Matters series complements this process and contributes to the participants' long-term success by collaborating with existing workforce-preparation programs to teach young adults the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in the workplace.



### The Circle is Complete!

One of the goals for the Extension in 2016 was to add a companion piece to the wildly successful program for 9-12 year-old adolescent females: The Girls Empowerment Circle. The SEL team is pleased to announce that 2016 exceeded expectations. In addition to developing a program for adolescent males, The Pride: Boys Empowerment Program, the SEL team also created gender-specific workshops for teens. With these new programs, Extension can provide youth with the tools they need to face the physical, emotional, and environmental challenges they may confront in each stage of their development.

## School Readiness Programs for Parents

In preparing their young children for school, parents play a vital role in fostering emergent literacy skills as well as academic and social-emotional readiness. School Readiness Programs for Parents aim to provide parents with programming that cover these topics, offered through Chicago Public School's Child Parent Centers.

Parents learned developmentally appropriate activities to teach their children the pre-reading and pre-writing skills needed to help them become successful readers and writers. They also learned strategies to support their children's social-emotional well-being using enriching language and modeling positive relationships. Evaluation responses indicate that 100% of participating parents intend to take at least one action in enhancing academic and social skill development in their children.

## Someday is Today

At one time or another, most of us have said, "Someday I'll try that," or, "Someday I'll go there," but then never seem to get around to it. The family life workshop "Someday Is Today: Live Your Bucket List" was presented in several locations throughout Cook County this year to motivate nearly 150 attendees to explore and develop a personal plan for their retirement years by creating their bucket lists. The workshops provided an opportunity for them to learn how to set mini to maxi goals, to create specific, measurable, and achievable objectives, and the importance of doing so throughout life.

## Spotlighting Success

The Extension Family Life team received the 2016 National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Florence Hall Award, first place national winner for Family Life team work in brain health and aging!



## Wits Fitness

Based on research that challenging the brain and staying socially engaged are two of several things individuals can do to contribute to brain health as they age, Wits Fitness is an ongoing "brain exercise" class offered through Cook County Extension's Learning is Timeless program. Each Wits Fitness class is custom designed with brain health contributor concepts along with new and ongoing intellectual challenges that can enhance memory skills in the areas of short and long-term memory, attention, spatial reasoning, and critical thinking. In this program year, 13 customized Wits Fitness classes were taught making 316 direct contacts.

**This is what  
I've needed in  
retirement; for  
as the body slows  
down, so does the  
brain and both need  
exercise to keep  
functioning well.**

**WITS FITNESS PARTICIPANT**



Participants listening intently during a LIT workshop.

Since its inception in September 2011, LIT has offered over 430 workshops making 6,353 participant contacts.

### Learning is Timeless

Learning is Timeless (LIT) is a multi-disciplinary educational model where older adults participate in mind stimulating workshops addressing family life, health, and horticulture topics in a comfortable social setting. Year round workshops offer participants the opportunity to engage in learning for personal enrichment and camaraderie.



**694**  
Participant contacts in 2016

In addition to ongoing programming, highlights from 2016 include the LIT book and movie clubs where participants discuss stories, learn relatable life skills, and share experiences with one another. Book and movie selections correlate to one or more of the three areas of LIT and are facilitated by the corresponding educators.

### What Our Participants Are Saying About Learning is Timeless

“I attend LIT because the programs are intellectually stimulating and a good part of my adult continuing education.”

“These classes offer a wealth of knowledge led by nice and understanding instructors. I have learned much and met some very nice people.”

“For me, it is a wonderful outlet of learning, sharing and interaction.”

“I attend LIT to meet people of wisdom. We can all learn a thing or two no matter what age we are.”

## OFFICE LOCATIONS

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## 2016 EXTENSION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Extension Cook County thanks our council volunteers who serve in an advisory role — cooperating with us in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating and

financing Extension programs to meet the needs, interests and resources of our community. The 2016 council is comprised of the following individuals:

Cheryl A. Bacon  
Arleta Bazile  
Angelo R. Chavers  
Jeremy Chia  
Barbara Clark  
Thurman W. Foreman

Carlos Hernandez  
Melvin Jefferson  
Michael Johns  
Sylvia Y. Jones  
Sharon Lewis  
Martha Madkins  
Marvin McNeil

Bob Mead  
Geri Redd  
Dedra Ries  
Edna Rodriguez  
Dion Smith  
Reginald Summerrise



**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 any program, please contact the county Extension Office.  
The Illinois Nutrition Education Program is funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).