



2017 Impact Report

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION
SERVING LIVINGSTON, MCLEAN,
& WOODFORD COUNTIES

I ILLINOIS

Extension

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER
& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES





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Visit us!
go.illinois.edu/LMW

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A Note from the County Director

It is my pleasure to present the 2017 Impact Report for University of Illinois Extension serving Livingston, McLean, and Woodford counties. I am proud to represent the staff and volunteers in our unit who through their hard work make our programming possible.

University of Illinois Extension is about learning. We provide educational programs and research-based information enabling local citizens to make practical decisions that improve the quality of their lives. The nationwide network of Extension programs began in 1914 as a means of presenting land-grant university research in understandable and useful ways to farmers and rural families. Today, Extension serves both urban and rural areas.

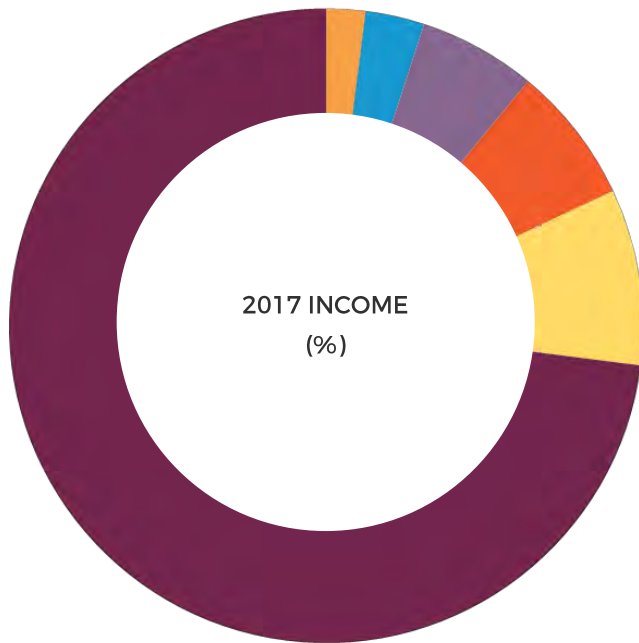
This impact report highlights just a few of our major accomplishments for 2017. You will find information about 4-H Youth Development, Horticulture, Local Food Systems and Small Farms, Nutrition and Wellness, and Consumer Economics. The programs we provide are innovative, research-based, and connect to audiences of all ages.

The accomplishments provided in the annual report were possible because of the contributions of our local county boards, local businesses, private organizations, personal donations, and generous volunteers. Please join us in the commitment to our mission: Extending knowledge and changing lives!

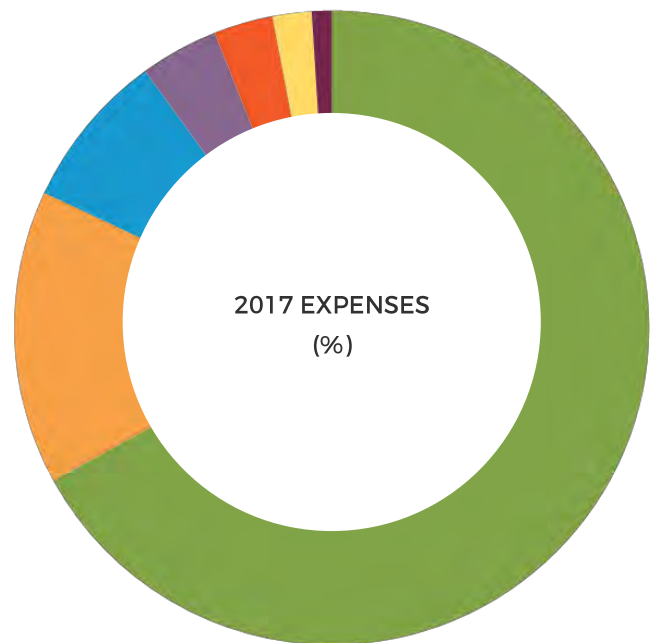
Thank you to everyone who makes Extension successful!

Bobbie Lewis - Sibley, MBA, SHRM-CP
County Extension Director





- 73 Local Sources
- 9 U of I General Revenue Fund
- 7 Self-Supporting
- 6 4-H Premiums
- 3 Federal Smith Lever
- 2 Gifts and Donations
- 0 State Match



- 67 Salaries
- 15 Rent/Leases/Utilities
- 8 Program/Educational Services & Supplies
- 4 Office Supplies/Postage/Printing, etc.
- 3 Travel
- 2 Equipment and Maintenance
- 1 Separation Pool

Education Outreach



6,295

Page Likes on 10 Pages & 1 Public Group



Over 288,273 views

Blog Page Views & 1 Viral Post (Over 200,000 views alone)



994

Published Print & Online Articles



70+ Radio or TV Interviews

Educator & Master Gardener Programs



31,012

Adults & Youth Reached/Face-to-Face Education



1,372,481

Members indirectly educated through Extension resources

2017 Extension Council Members

Barry Ankney

Rich Clemmons

Kelly Cochran Cohlman

Sarah Craft

Tammy Johns

Jacob Larkin (YOUTH)

Deborah Niemann-Boehle

Emily Schirer

Sherry Schlatter

Chloe Thacker (YOUTH)

Clayton Thomas (YOUTH)

Blaine Troyer

Linda Faye White

Ed McKibbin



Service project helps feed local families in need

One hundred and thirty-four. That is the number of 4-H members, leaders, and community members from Livingston, McLean, and Woodford counties who made a difference in their communities by participating in a meal-packaging event at the Interstate Center on Sat., Sept. 30.

Volunteers started with empty boxes and in about three hours had 102 boxes of food. These boxes were then made available to food pantries in the three counties and the Midwest Food Bank. The smiles and laughs that filled our building that day proved that helping others is something our 4-H clubs and communities enjoy.

- › 134 4-H members, family, and community volunteers.
- › 102 boxes, each filled with 36 meal packages.
- › Packaged 3,672 rice casseroles packets containing 22,032 servings for distribution to local food banks.

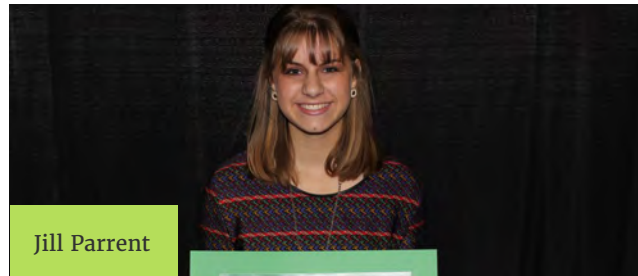
While this is a new venture for our 4-H programs, it will not be our last. State Farm Bank and the Feeding and Growing Our Communities Program through the Illinois 4-H Foundation were main event sponsors. The McLean County Fair Association gave the building space as a gift-in-kind to the effort. The Normal Rotary Club and numerous donations have already made a contribution to lead the way for fundraising for the next event!



4-H clubs and guests at the unit meal-packaging event.

4-H State Award recognition hits home

Jill Parrent, a member of Greenleafers 4-H (McLean County) received the 4-H Experience Award. This inaugural award was created to recognize youth who try new things, experiment in project areas they enjoy and explore opportunities around the state and country. Jill was a member of the Youth Leadership Team and attended both National 4-H Congress and Conference. Congratulations, Jill!



Jill Parrent

Rachel Casey, a member of the Riverview Clover Achievers 4-H Club (Woodford County), was elected to serve as one of two Illinois 4-H representatives for the National 4-H Shooting Sports Ambassador program. During her tenure as an Ambassador, Rachel will be representing over 320,000 4-H youth. Great job, Rachel!



Rachel Casey

Jacob Larkin, a member of the Pontiac Power Rockets 4-H Club (Livingston County) was honored with the Illinois 4-H Key Award. This award emphasizes community service and mentorship by 4-H members throughout their 4-H career. Jacob is often leading projects involving volunteering and visiting nursing home residents and also mentoring youth in his 4-H club. Way to go, Jacob.



Jacob Larkin



4-H Clubs
(Livingston, McLean, & Woodford)

111 Community & Cloverbud Clubs

14 SPIN Clubs

1,979 Total 4-H Enrollment

*McLean County 4-H has the largest 4-H Enrollment in Illinois.





4-H Program Growth

6,878 Fair Exhibits

33 4-H Federation Members

49 4-H Teen Teachers



422
4-H Volunteers!





4-H serves to empower all youth regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, learning ability, culture, etc.

Mercy Thacker of the Woodford County Go-Getters 4-H Club is an amazing example of this. Thacker was diagnosed with Down syndrome, but she and her family have not let that stand in the way. She joined 4-H at age 8 and has had an incredible journey in these past five years. According to her mom, Teresa, Thacker's biggest hurdle when she started was the judging and interview process at the county 4-H show.

She had difficulty interpreting questions and describing her project process. In return, some of the judges had trouble understanding her when she spoke. 4-H accommodated Thacker by allowing her to provide pictures with typed descriptions, as well as having her mom and 4-H leader assist her during judging. However, since then, Thacker has gone from limited verbal interactions during interviews, to enjoying full conversations on her own with the judges.

4-H has provided Thacker with the opportunity to master these skills and enhance her interaction with others. She is very proud of her accomplishments and continues to create memorable experiences each year. Her favorite 4-H projects are Horse and Citizenship. Thacker, along with a guide in the ring, shows horses every year. She really enjoys sharing her pony with others and her mother believes the horse project allows Thacker to participate on an equal level with her peers more than any other project. As a parent, she sees 4-H providing Thacker "an opportunity to try activities while completing projects, participating in meetings, working with a team, being involved in interviews, and being instructed and assessed on an individual basis, all while getting support from family and friends."



Extension's Deborah Seiler, left, meets with Mercy Thacker, to hear all about her summer 4-H projects.



Dean Kim Kidwell, center, and County Director Bobbie Lewis-Sibley listen as Christivie Nzenzo shares her 4-H journey.

Christivie Nzenzo was just 9 years old when she immigrated to the United States from the Congo in February of 2011. The culture and language were vastly different and she did not have a lot of English vocabulary when she arrived. Life also seemed to operate at a much faster pace here than back home.

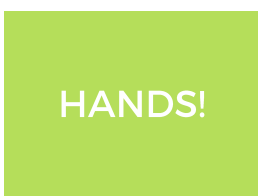
She joined McLean County 4-H in March of that year when she began attending Unity Community Center. As she struggled to learn and adapt to her new home, Unity and 4-H became a place where she could gain hands-on experience and participate in activities that helped her develop a clearer picture of her new surroundings.

Aside from helping her adjust, the biggest impact 4-H has had on Nzenzo is that it made her more responsible and a better leader. She says, "It also helped me grow into who I am through the environment it provided."

Being able to attend the Jr. 4-H Leadership Conference and the Illini Summer Academy allowed her to meet other 4-H members from across the state, attend informational workshops, explore career options, and develop a plan for what she wants to do in life. As a result, she is now interested in studying anthropology.

My favorite part of 4-H is having the opportunity to try new things. It allows me to step out of my comfort zone and experience what the world has out there. I don't get to travel often and it shows me all the things I can do.

CHRISTINE NZENGO





Unity Community Center

Unity Community Center operated with 48 youth for the 2016-2017-program year filled with learning, summer camps, and many adventures along the way. Unity also continues to bring in volunteers from partnering organizations such as Illinois State University, State Farm, Illinois Extension serving DuPage, Kane, and Kendall counties, and the Town of Normal. We recently added partnership and programming with the Normal Police Department, which included our first successful community event together, Pumpkins & Painting.

- ▶ Weekly produce distribution serving between 70-150 individuals every week.
- ▶ Over 5,000 pounds of food distributed.
- ▶ Unity production garden harvested 1,250 pounds of food that went to area families.
- ▶ 4-H Fridays: Monthly 4-H meetings as well as 4-H project time including cookie design, fashion, sewing, and more.
- ▶ First Unity member received 4-H county award, which placed her in the running for state recognition.
- ▶ Unity staff was named the North Central Region Winner for Excellence in Urban Programming for the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents
- ▶ 199 volunteers at Unity Community Center.

2016-2017 Unity Enrollment

67% Black/African American
20% White
7% American Indian/ Alaskan Native
3% Asian
3% Two or more races
87% Hispanic
13% Non-Hispanic
60% Female
40% Male



Youth participate in the Jr. Chef at Unity summer camp.



4-H Teen Teachers presenting at Junior Chef Program.

Growing our 4-H Teen Teachers

In its third year, the Teen Teacher program has grown to include 49 teens from McLean and Livingston counties. Teen Teachers work with many partner sites and teach a wide variety of topics to local youth. Highlights from the past year include:

- ▶ Provided youth the opportunity to learn about aerospace, robotics, 3-D printing, crime scene science, and virtual reality at County 4-H shows.
- ▶ Taught Cloverbud workshops in Livingston.
- ▶ Led nine youth in a demonstration of flower arranging and DIY spa products at the Pontiac Public Library.
- ▶ Twenty-four teens taught five weeks of summer camp at Unity Community Center. They shared lessons on junk drawer robotics, theater arts, and entomology. The teens reached 25 youth each week.
- ▶ Led 15 youth during Extension Junior Chef Camp.
- ▶ Assisted with after-school robotics clubs at Benjamin and Grove Elementary schools in McLean County with 50 youth in attendance.
- ▶ Assisted with aerospace club at the Prairie Aviation Museum.
- ▶ Participated in Normal West High School's "Girls Who Code Night," teaching a binary code workshop to 95 students in third to fifth grades.



Livingston 4-H Ambassadors teaching Cloverbud Workshop



Students learning about "Chick it Out" embryology program.

Welcoming "STEAM" in the Classroom

Along with a new name, STEAM in the Classroom rejuvenated programs as well as created new experiences for youth interested in **Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts/Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM)**.

COLLEGE & CAREER CONFERENCE

One hundred high school youth from across Illinois attended the conference, along with 50 academic and industry professionals representing their organizations. This event exposed and educated youth to be more intentional with their plans after graduating high school. The day was filled with mock interviews, resume building, panels, questions, and more.



Extension staff greeted over one hundred students at the first College & Career Conference held at Illinois State University.

THE JOHN MAITLAND AG AWARENESS GRANT

The grant awarded \$5555.99 to seven McLean County teachers to support them in their efforts to promote agricultural awareness in their classrooms. Funded projects include creating school gardens and taking nature-themed field trips.

CHICK IT OUT

Chick it Out's embryology program from egg to chick reached over 2,000 students in classrooms in McLean County.

These egg turners will be filled with eggs in classrooms in McLean County.



ELECTRICITY SPIN CLUB

McLean County 4-H partnered with Bloomington Normal Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee and Illinois Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 197 to provide 11 4-H members with the opportunity to learn about DC current, Ohm's Law, shop safety, reading blueprints, and more. The goal is to work alongside professional electricians in their training facility for a unique opportunity to experience working in the trades.

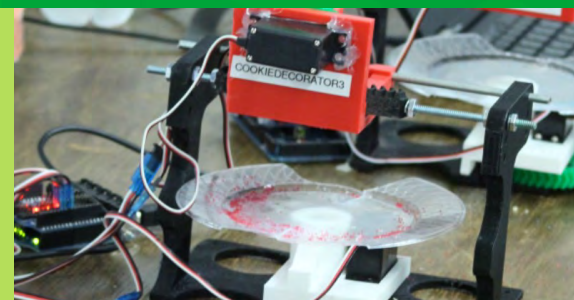
STEAM RESOURCE CATALOG

This comprehensive, 54-page resource catalog is a valuable asset for 4-H leaders, educators, and community programs. The catalog outlines all the free resources STEAM has that are used to educate youth and provide authentic learning experiences. Resources for check out include kits, books, DVD's, research-based curricula, and supplies.

TECH DAY AT MCLEAN COUNTY FAIR

Extension's STEAM in the Classroom sponsored Tech Day at the McLean County Fair and created a mini expo filled with various realms of technology for students and fair visitors to explore. It created awareness for the program as well as a new face of technology to many visitors. Nearly 200 people experimented with robotics displays, 3-D cookie designs, digital finger printing, and more!

3-D Cookie Designs during Tech Day at McLean County Fair.





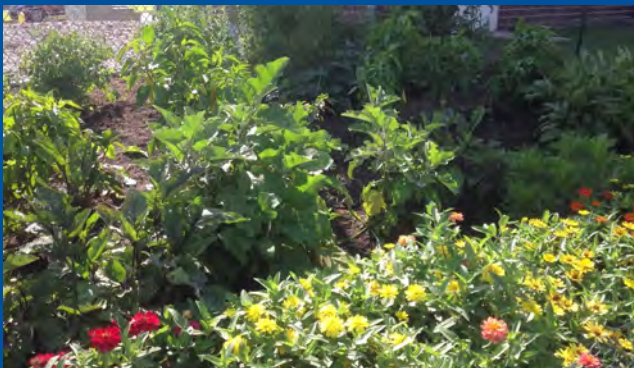
Jail Garden Blooms into Inmate Meals & Inspirations

One of the biggest complaints often heard from inmates in jail is the awful food. Fresh vegetables are rare in most jails because of food budgets. Our Horticulture team started a new adventure and in their first year of collaboration, with inmates at the Woodford County Jail, established a garden program. The project used 1,000 square feet to produce hundreds of pounds of tomatoes, peppers, green beans, carrots, herbs, and even edible flowers. Horticulture educator Kelly Allsup and Quinton Arbuckle, Woodford County Jail Facilities and Maintenance director, worked with an average of four inmates each week.

A jail garden adds vegetables and herbs to inmate meals that improve taste and nutrition. The program also teaches them gardening skills such as planting, harvesting, watering, math, and developing and following a plan. A male inmate mentioned, "Although I have a garden at home with my grandmother and dad, I learned that you can eat carrot tops in a salad and spinach is a cool season crop that you can grow in the fall."



With Extension's guidance, Woodford County Jail inmates work the soil in their newly established garden.



Produce and plants grown in the Woodford Jail Garden.

Kelly challenged me to do a garden map using new math skills to convert feet to inches. I am inspired to seek work in the industry when my sentence is complete.

INMATE



The produce grown outside and cooked in the jail kitchens proved to be much more than just meals.

Master Gardener Statistics



160

Master Gardeners



1,178

Total Page Likes



12,295.50

Volunteer Hours



2,249.25

Continuing Education Hours



\$319,068.23

Value to Communities

Totals for all Livingston, McLean and Woodford County Master Gardeners.





Beat the winter blues with Home, Lawn and Garden Day



Home, Lawn and Garden Day is a day dedicated to garden fun and is the ideal place to get inspiration for future garden projects, fall in love with a must-have plant, or learn the basics of everyday gardening. McLean County Master Gardeners hosted their 15th annual Home, Lawn and Garden Day just in time to beat the winter blues.

Keynote speaker Chris Benda, is a botanist for the Illinois Natural History Survey. He shared tips on how to incorporate Illinois' beautiful native flowers into your own garden space.

The day also included floral demonstrations, and a choice of three additional classes ranging from turf tips to techniques to help attract cardinals to your yard. Throughout the day there was also the silent auction, lunch, discussions, and shopping with industry vendors.

- › 261 Total attendees
- › 21 Different counties in Illinois represented
- › 41 Unique workshop topics
- › 75 Master Gardener volunteers
- › 24 Industry-leading exhibitors

My first time and it was fantastic. I learned a lot of practical applications for my new interests in my own home and garden.

**HOME, LAWN AND GARDEN DAY
ATTENDEE**



go.illinois.edu/HLGD



Gardening enthusiasts and Master Gardeners from all over Illinois attend Home, Lawn and Garden Day every year to enjoy workshops, speakers, and more!

McLean County Master Gardeners COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- › Community Cancer Center Gardens
- › Extension Office Pots
- › Friends First
- › ISU Horticulture Center Herb Garden
- › Mecherle Healing Garden
- › Sarah's Garden at David Davis Mansion

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER PROJECTS

- › Bloomington Junior High School Garden Club
- › Children's Discovery Museum Lessons
- › Holton Homes- Nature Workers 4-H SPIN Club
- › LeRoy School Garden
- › Unity Community Center

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- › Home, Lawn and Garden Day
- › Client Services/Outreach-Bloomington Farmers Market, Downs Farmers Market, Booths, Help Desk, WJBC Panel



McLean County Master Gardeners plan and execute Home, Lawn and Garden Day for over 250 guests!



Polli Nator's Garden gets warm welcome into local community

Livingston County Master Gardeners transformed an overgrown, neglected backyard at the new library into "Polli Nator's Garden," a certified monarch waystation and pollinator pocket. This project was accomplished through the support and dedication of the Village of Flanagan.

Community Partnerships:

- Master Gardeners, students, teachers, 4-H groups, community members, and Library Board trustees helped to prepare the site, plant the garden, and maintain it throughout the summer.

Educational Programs

- Master Gardeners offered three workshops for youth: beneficial insects, making an insect hotel, and garden scavenger hunt.
- High school horticulture classes collected seeds from the garden they planted to grow and sell at their community sale in the spring.
- An educational display was created at the library for all patrons to learn more about pollinators.
- Book displays, both fiction and nonfiction, relating to gardening, insects, and plants were also added.
- An entryway bulletin board highlighted various horticulture topics each month such as native plants, pollinators, beneficial insects, and reasons to plant natives.

Grants:

- Wild One's "Native Plant Society Forever Wild Grant" and U of I Extension Illinois Master Gardener Program "Mini-Grants" enabled Master Gardeners to help create the native garden to educate and influence the community.

Youth projects included Insect Hotels for Pollinators.



The community involvement sparked this garden to life.

The dedication and hard work of the Master Gardeners have created a vibrant place to learn about the natural world.
BRITTANY, BLOMQUIST,
FLANAGAN LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Livingston County Master Gardeners COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- 4-H Park Gardens
- Dargan Park
- Yost House Gardens
- Village of Flanagan Gardens

JUNIOR MASTER GARDENER PROJECTS

- Youth Enrichment Lessons
- Flanagan School Gardens

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- A Day in the Garden Patch
- Client Services/Outreach- Help Desk, Pontiac Farmers' Market, Booths



Livingston County Master Gardeners in Pontiac.



Woodford County Master Gardeners COMMUNITY PROJECTS

- › El Paso Library Pollinator Garden
- › Germantown Hills Middle School Garden
- › Garden of Giving at Great Oaks Community Church
- › ICC Demonstration Gardens
- › Woodford County Courthouse Gardens

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- › Eureka Library programs
- › Gardeners' Gathering
- › Client Services/Outreach-Booths,
Plant Science table



I just LOVE being out in the garden! You always see something new out here!

FOURTH GRADE STUDENT

Changing the lives of youth at Germantown Hills Middle School

Woodford County Master Gardeners teach the youth about planting and harvesting flowers and vegetables from seed to clean up at the Germantown Hills Middle School Garden, also known as the Simpson-Bandeko Courtyard Learning and Memory Garden. The garden boasts a gazebo, pond with fish, native garden, vegetable and herb garden, and much more!



Germantown Hills Garden

"The Germantown Hills garden has been a great addition to our school. Besides being a great place to take a class to read and enjoy the beauty of nature, the garden has proven to be a great educational tool. Kids have gained a great deal of knowledge about how soil evolves and how composting can be done. Students have participated in both the planting of seeds as well as harvesting. The third grade also releases their painted lady butterflies into the garden every year, adding to the students understanding of pollination as well as plant life cycles. The garden has truly been a blessing." -Dan Arnold, third-grade teacher

- › 85 kindergarten students toured the garden in the fall for their introduction to the area.
- › 98 first-grade students planted pansy plugs to take home. They learned about growing and caring for plants.
- › 100 third-grade students planted vegetables and flowers. They learned about pollinators, composting, perennials, annuals, and more!
- › 100 fourth-grade students harvested vegetables, gathered zinnia and marigold seeds, and helped with fall garden clean up as part of a Pioneer Thematic Unit.
- › 15 sixth and eighth graders helped maintain the garden by hauling 20 tons of a topsoil/compost mix from the parking lot to the courtyard garden.
- › Numerous classrooms visited the garden weekly for additional lessons, journaling, and reading.
- › 8 Master Gardeners dedicated over 200 hours to this project.





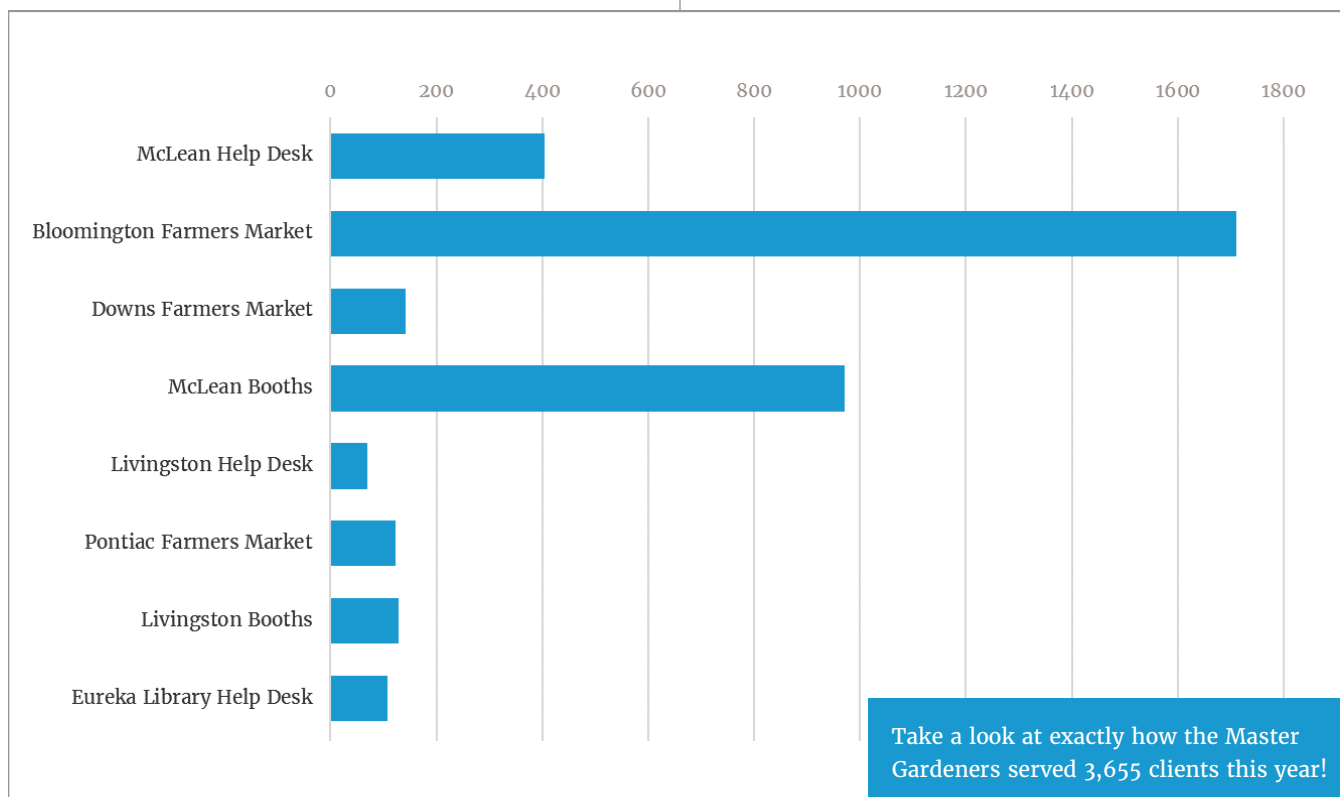
Master Gardener Community Outreach Efforts

According to the National Garden Bureau, two reasons people choose not to garden is lack of knowledge and financial constraints. The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program helps alleviate these issues by providing the community assistance with answering gardening questions through various avenues. Master Gardeners hold weekly office hours at Extension offices for the public to ask questions via phone, email, or walk-ins. Other community education outreach efforts include booths at the Farmers' Markets in Bloomington, Downs, and Pontiac, as well as the Eureka Library and various community events. The demonstrations developed by Extension staff teach the community a variety of horticulture topics such as tree pruning and ways to use unique vegetables.

- › The Master Gardeners increased their contacts at the Bloomington Farmers Market by 350 percent in the first year of offering interactive displays, and another 50 percent in the second year.
- › Over 3,655 clients were served through various outreach efforts shown below.



Master Gardeners are often heard sharing gardening tips over the airwaves through radio programs.



Take a look at exactly how the Master Gardeners served 3,655 clients this year!



**Master
Gardeners!**



**Master
Naturalists!**





Training year brings brand new members!

Sixteen new Master Naturalist interns completed 78 hours of classroom and field training last fall. New training sites included a full day at the National Weather Service in Lincoln, Franklin Farm in Lexington, a rock quarry in Livingston County, and a return to the Therkildsen Field Station at Emiquon. The training concluded with a session presented by Illinois Grand Prairie Master Naturalist partners and community members who led citizen science efforts to kick-start the interns' volunteer experience.

Continuing Education Opportunities:

- › Owls – Given Harper, Illinois Wesleyan Department of Biological Sciences
- › American Bald Eagles (including nest observation of juvenile bald eagles on the Mackinaw River) – Mary Jo Adams, Master Naturalist
- › Solar Eclipse – Lee Green, Twin City Astronomers
- › Red Wolves and Zoo Conservation Programs – Miller Park Zoo Staff



Master Naturalist interns during field exploration training.

I quickly found I filled a niche as a Master Naturalist. As Master Naturalists, we are not 'content experts.' What we tend to bring to the table is awareness.

**SHAUN BILL
MASTER NATURALIST**

Master Naturalist Statistics



93
Master
Naturalists



618
Total
Page Likes



4,399.50
Volunteer
Hours



850
Continuing
Education Hours



\$114,167.02
Value to Communities

Totals for all Livingston, McLean, and Woodford County Master Naturalists.



Master Naturalist meetings always consist of exploration and learning while enjoying nature's classrooms.



As the food forest bears fruit, a community's fascination blooms

Free food is good, but the goal of the food forest project is to provide Bloomington-Normal with a unique experience that marries recreation, food and education simply by taking a walk through the “forest.”

In year three, the plants are producing ripe, organic fruits in the thousands of pounds. On any given day during the lengthy harvest season, community members can be found picking berries and herbs, and often sharing photos and experiences of what they find with our active Facebook community.

Bloom Community School in Bloomington used the site as an outdoor classroom this summer, where students experienced a diversity of the site’s perennial food crops. Beyond tasting the fresh-from-the-cane fruits and smelling the culinary herbs between their fingers, the students also learned about food preservation, insect behaviors (including Japanese beetle management), and even explored color and texture within their arts programming on site.

Bill Davison, Extension educator in the Local Food Systems and Small Farms program, said he is amazed, but not exactly surprised, by the kids’ willingness to try the fruits as a snack, particularly the tart black currants. Part of Davison’s mission with The Refuge Food Forest is to cultivate better eaters at a young age.



facebook.com/groups/foodforest/



Walking the rows of The Refuge Food Forest, Normal.

“At this point, it’s hard to find any significant quantity of berries left on the plants, which is exactly what we were hoping for,” said Davison.



It's a space of exploration and imagination, and we were continually amazed by the creative and thoughtful ways children learned within and from the food forest. This is a treasure in our community for children and educators alike.

LAURA KALMES
DRIECTOR, BLOOM COMMUNITY



Students from Bloom Community School explore the Food Forest!

Here's exactly what was harvested this past season

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Raspberries | 250 lbs. |
| Pears | 15 lbs. |
| Apples | 5 lbs. |
| Aronia | 20 lbs. |
| Asparagus | 40 lbs. |
| Blackberries | 300 lbs. |
| Chestnut | 5 lbs. |
| Currant | 200 lbs. |
| Elderberry | 10 lbs. |
| Hazelnut | 5 lbs. |
| Herbs | 15 lbs. |



A year for wishes “granted”

Local Food Systems and Small Farms will be working on fulfilling requirements set forth by two grants received in 2017 that will extend years of research on both participatory corn breeding and local foods program promotions.

USDA Participatory Corn Breeding & Testing Grant

- › USDA will invest nearly \$2 million toward a University of Illinois project.
- › Allow farmers, researchers, and consumers to participate in breeding corn optimized for organic production.
- › Integrate all the components of the food chain—from the field-to-table—connecting researchers, producers, and consumers.

Bill Davison, University of Illinois Extension educator and co-investigator on the project, says that growers currently do not have many choices in the marketplace when it comes to organically produced corn. But, he says, top-performing genetic lines have been tested at the university. These need to be evaluated across a variety of conditions to make further improvements, and that is where participating farmers come in. The project will develop a participatory testing network with farmers from Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin, and New York.

Farmers Market & Local Food Promotion Grant

With prices for the top three U.S. crops—corn, soybeans, and wheat—now entering the fifth straight year of decline, farmers in the Upper Midwest are facing a difficult outlook for their businesses.

- › Local food markets can offer higher-value alternatives to farmers who already have land, equipment, and experience suited to grain production as they seek options.

Accustomed as they are to commodity market value chains, farmers face significant barriers to local food market access: lack of knowledge of high-performing varieties for specialty bakeries; challenges milling and distributing smaller volumes of differentiated grains; and insufficient information about attributes attractive to consumers, such as taste and nutrition. Working through this grant, creating new partnerships and providing resources will help meet the goal of increasing the local foods movement across both farms and states.

Up and Milling with Extension

Part of the Local Food Promotion Grant is Janie’s Farm, which is a 2,500-acre organic grain farm in Danforth, IL. Harold and Ross Wilken, along with five full-time employees, manage diverse crop rotations and the on-farm plots for the organic grain variety trial program for the University of Illinois. In addition, they have built a new flour mill to add value to their grain crops.



Flour Mill operation at Janie’s Farm in Danforth, IL

The Mill at Janie’s Farm consists of two 30-inch Engsko stone mills and a complete sifting and bagging system that is completely sealed and operates on vacuum pressure. This new farmer-led business is an important piece of the missing local food system infrastructure, and they have begun selling commercial quantities of flour to distributors in Chicago.

The mill has the capacity to produce millions of pounds of flour per year, and the bins on the farm contain tens of thousands of bushels of grain. They produce whole kernel flour that contains the full nutritional profile of the seed. This is due to 70 to 100 percent of the bran and germ being left in the flour. This fresh nutrient dense flour aligns with consumer interests and gives them a unique niche in the marketplace. 2018 will be the first full season of production and a test to see how many pounds of flour and grain can be sold into local markets.



Janie’s Farm’s miller, Jill, checks in on the milling process.



ABC's of School Nutrition

Getting kids to choose and eat nutritious food that schools offer is no easy task. To help with this effort, the Illinois State Board of Education enlisted University of Illinois Extension nutrition professionals to provide training, education and technical assistance to school food service staff. We have brought in the “smarter lunchroom” approach, which is based in part on the research conducted at University of Illinois by Professor Brian Wansink. This approach promotes a more appealing school cafeteria environment and uses behavioral economics to influence eating behavior. In the second year of the three-year \$4.5 million grant, our unit has directly seen results of:

- › 81 school food service staff trained in McLean & Livingston Counties
- › Assessed and reassessed 17 different schools in four school districts

After observing the lunch services, we made suggestions on incorporating smarter lunchroom techniques:

- › Whole fruit in a fruit basket and placing it next to the register for a last-chance grab
- › Naming the cafeteria to highlight school pride
- › Placing menu boards and pictures of the reimbursable meal ahead of the service line to promote healthy lunch options



Schools assessed in 2017 that adding fruit and changing how it is displayed near the registers helped increase overall fruit purchases by youth.

Overall, we have helped influence the health of approximately 22,657 children living in Livingston, McLean, and Woodford counties.



Once these changes were implemented, we reassessed District 87 schools. Post assessment figures reported a total increase of 94 points on the Smarter Lunchrooms Scorecard, even increasing Stevenson Elementary School to gold status, a feat that is hard to achieve. We did not just notice improvements in the scorecard numbers; we noticed improvement in the students' eating behaviors. After Bloomington Junior High School put baskets of fruit next to the registers, placed a variety of colorful fruit in clear containers, and moved them to eye-level we discovered:

- › Total fruit sales skyrocketed by 46 percent, including a 66 percent increase in fresh fruit sales!

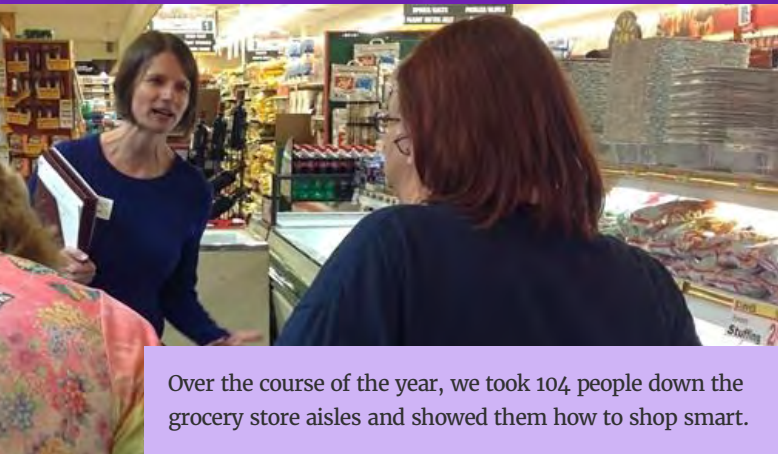
In addition to smarter lunchrooms observations, Extension has helped Dwight Common schools offer two different taste tests to students to promote vegetable consumption. Enough of the students liked the vegetable salads that they will now be included on the menu during the vegetable harvest season. We also helped Prairie Central School District write their school wellness policy to meet new state and federal guidelines. Along with our assistance, they now have a new wellness committee to address student's health and well-being.

Overall, we have helped influence the health of approximately 22,657 children living in Livingston, McLean, and Woodford counties.



Supermarket Tours

Anyone living within 60 miles of Fairbury, Illinois knows about Dave's Supermarket. It is a family-run business that's been in operation since 1950, and this year, they have set a commitment to bring wellness into their business and community. Since we share this same goal, Extension was the perfect fit to help them achieve a community wellness program. We decided to offer grocery store tours to provide education in the location where consumers need it the most. A participant who was newly diagnosed with diabetes said, "I learned so much! I'm anxious to go home and tell my wife everything you told me." These tours happen once a month with Jenna Smith, nutrition and wellness educator and registered dietitian, and her team.



Over the course of the year, we took 104 people down the grocery store aisles and showed them how to shop smart.

Food preservation is on the move

Food preservation is increasingly growing with the local food movement. After a successful first year of offering the hands-on food preservation program, "Yes! You CAN: Preserving Practice," we looked to see how we could change it to make it even better. Previously, we held the program at the Extension office, which limited us to only one stovetop and therefore, a limited number of participants. Hands-on time was also an issue, as we had to spend a majority of the time in lecture.



I appreciated watching the videos. It gave me time to process the information and come with questions.

**FOOD PRESERVATION CLASS
PARTICIPANT ON CHANGES TO NEW
STYLE OF EXTENSION WORKSHOP**

In response to the evaluations and general observations, we established a partnership with Illinois State University to secure the newly renovated foods lab, which offers six workstations and even cameras to view canning demonstrations. We also used "EdPuzzle," a program that allowed us to embed questions into food preservation videos. Participants were able to view them prior to coming to class. This allowed less time in lecture and more time in lab. One participant wrote on their evaluation, "I appreciated watching the videos. It gave me time to process the information and come with questions." We aim to continue to improve the program and serve as the No. 1 resource for food preservation.



Food preservation participants prepare ingredients during a tomato preservation class.





Diversity and “I on Diabetes” Grows

According to CDC health reports last year, more than 100 million Americans are living with diabetes or prediabetes. Unfortunately, the burden of diabetes is much higher for racial/ethnic minorities. In fact, the Hispanic population are approximately 50 percent more likely to die from diabetes than whites are.

The “I on Diabetes” program, supported by the Alpha Gamma Delta Foundation’s \$1,500 grant, funded the Livingston County “I on Diabetes” program in 2016 and continued in McLean and Woodford counties in 2017. It targeted minority and economically disadvantaged populations to help them self-manage the disease and decrease complications related to diabetes.

This free program consisted of either two or four, three-hour sessions, which included food demonstrations with tastings, visuals of proper serving sizes, and a low-impact physical activity segment.

- Collaborated with the Community Health Care Clinic in Normal to offer attendees “Vivir Bien Con La Diabetes” (Living Well with Diabetes), which was translated into Spanish. We also offered “I on Diabetes” to English proficient attendees.
- “Vivir Bien Con La Diabetes” was the first and only class that any of the attendees had ever participated in. According to one participant, “It (diabetes) is less scary now.”

In Eureka, University of Illinois Extension collaborated with Heartline and Hearthouse, a non-profit organization offering numerous forms of assistance to Woodford County residents, to offer “I on Diabetes” to 15 attendees.

- One participant reported that her hemoglobin A1C went from 11 percent at the start of the program to 6 percent six months after the program, which meets the American Diabetes Association target goal of 7 percent or less (American Diabetes Association 2016).



Evaluation data of the “I on Diabetes” program proved successful in changing participant’s attitudes and behaviors.



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION (SNAP-Education)

SNAP-Education works with limited-resource audiences to make healthier choices where they eat, shop, live, play and learn in their communities. Through classes and workshops, and by working towards policy, systems, and environmental changes, SNAP-Education positively impacts the nutrition and activity choices of people and communities we serve.

Serving Local Residents



3,922

Total SNAP-Ed Participants



626 (16%)
Adults



3,296 (84%)
Youth



434 (11%)

Participants Who Identified as Hispanic

RACE OF PARTICIPANTS

■ 73% White (2,866)

■ 23% Black (918)

■ 4% American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, or Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (138)

Our Partners



19
K-12 Schools



2
Stores or Markets



8
Youth Centers



7
Community Centers



15
Early Childhood Centers



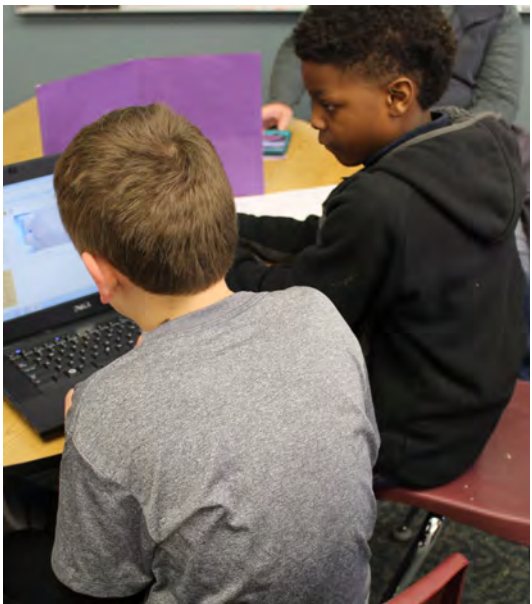
5
Food Pantries and Food Banks



| Staff Member | Extension Role |
|------------------------|---|
| Bobbie Lewis-Sibley | County Director |
| Sara Halihan | Business Manager |
| Kelly Allsup | Educator, Horticulture |
| Alcha Corban | Educator, 4-H Youth Development |
| Bill Davison | Educator, Local Food Systems and Small Farms |
| Brittnay Haag | Educator, Horticulture |
| Jenna Smith | Educator, Nutrition and Wellness |
| Camaya Wallace Bechard | Educator, Consumer Economics |
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| Rachel Benn | Program Coordinator, Nutrition and Wellness |
| Jenna Braasch | Publicity & Promotions Specialist |
| Callie Cummings | Program Coordinator, McLean County 4-H |
| Eric Fortune | Program Coordinator, Woodford County 4-H |
| Laura Holland | Program Coordinator, 4-H Metro & Unity |
| Elizabeth Repplinger | Program Coordinator, 4-H - Unity Community Center |
| Emily Saddler | Program Coordinator, 4-H - STEAM in the Classroom |
| Leah Street | Program Coordinator, McLean County 4-H |
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Thank you to each and every one of you that support Extension efforts in your communities!





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Extension

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& ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate in any program, please contact the county Extension Office.

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