



EXTENSION
IN ACTION 

Serving Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and
Winnebago Counties

ILLINOIS EXTENSION 2022

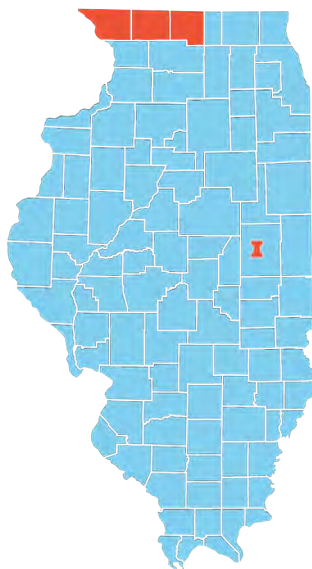


“In the before times...”

Many times, throughout the past three years, I have started a conversation with that phrase, referring, of course, to time before March, 2020. In spite of all my efforts to put it in the past, it still creeps into daily conversation, program planning, and making decisions about a variety of things.



Margaret Larson
County Extension Director



As we approached the 2022 programming year, we truly thought it was all behind us. But we found it wasn't. People were still hesitant to meet, families were waiting “one more year” to rejoin, partnering agencies and sites were still closed off to the public. We learned, we adjusted and continued to move forward with innovation and flexibility. We served our communities.

As time passed we saw slow changes, and a slow move “back to normal.” Inquiries about 4-H clubs increased and 4-H membership picked up. We re-worked 4-H Shows and Contests to incorporate some of the changes that we made due to restrictions but still made total sense. We continued to offer take home kits for youth to do guided learning at home.

We made many changes to our program offerings for adults as well. We re-envisioned Master Gardener volunteer training and offered it in a way that was more in tune with learning styles and accessible to a broader range of residents. Drawing on the experience of offering programs virtually out of necessity, we realized that our offerings needed to be varied in format. For some programming, virtual and in-person options are available. We are pleased to offer people the choice and realize that our virtual programming provides needed opportunities to those residents not living in our counties.

It has been wonderful to see our communities open up, staff return to community projects and events, volunteers resume regular meetings

and activities and rooms being full of youth and adults posed to contribute and learn. We are back in the business of being in front of people, contributing our expertise as needed.

What never changed? What was true “in the before times” as well as today? We are very fortunate to have such robust and stable funding in our unit, with support coming from three supportive county boards, four local fundraising foundations, and many other supporters of our programs and efforts. Our volunteers are top notch. From the 173 Master gardeners and master naturalists in the three counties, to our 4-H leaders and other adult and youth volunteers serving our youth programs, we are blessed with so many giving selflessly of their time, treasure and talent.

Our community partners provide a framework for our programming and services that we couldn't do without. From providing space to diving in to program planning or presenting, we are so fortunate to work with so many giving and talented folks in the area.

And finally, the staff. Talented. Enthused. Resourceful. Giving. Forgiving. Just a few words that come to mind when I take some time to think about the collective team and what they bring to the table. Not only are they doing great work locally, but many are providing programming and leadership of projects on a regional and statewide level.

Is Extension really the best kept secret in the state of Illinois? Definitely not in Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties! Thanks so much for your support.

In service,

Margaret Larson
County Extension Director



Unit 1 Field Research Day Highlights Partnerships in the Communities



Dr. Steve Worth gave a presentation on his life's work with Extension in agriculture in South Africa during the Unit 1 Field Research Day on August 30.

On August 30, Staff within Unit 1 along with members of the Extension Council, program partners and other U of I Extension staff in neighboring units came together for the first Unit Research Field Day in Freeport, Illinois. The purpose of this

event was to highlight some of our staff's collaborations and partnerships. Our Staff has developed long-term relationships, often with 10+ years of connections with these groups prior to working on these specific partnerships. Together U of I Extension staff and these partners aim to bring real research local.

First up was a presentation by Dr. Steve Worth, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Dr. Worth shared his life's work with Extension in agriculture in South Africa. This was a great opportunity to learn about how Extension continues to provide support and education in farm business management outside of Illinois. Not only did Dr. Worth share his own experiences with working in South Africa, but he discussed how Extension was able to help communities better understand how to manage their agricultural opportunities. He shared his trials and tribulations along with his success stories of how he managed in his role in Extension. His story was one of inspiration for all to hear.

Next up, Commercial Agriculture Educator Phillip Alberti led the group to the greenhouse at Highland Community College where he shared information about the Hemp Database project he has been working on. Alberti talked about how his research has even led to hands-on experience for students at Highland.

The group then traveled up the road to walk through the U of I Extension/Highland Community College Corn and Soybean Research Plots. Alberti explained various research studies being

done in the fields as well as how they have collaborated with the Community College and the students on the studies. He even showed the group everything that is entailed when he scouts the fields and does his weekly field growth reports for the northwestern Illinois region.

Rounding out the day was a trip across town to the Freeport High School Student Garden where Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Grant McCarty has been partnering with the



school for his Strawberry Research Project. Freeport High School Agriculture Teacher Ben Skipor was on-hand to give a tour of their vegetable garden and their vegetable stand/crop sharing program. Skipor also explained how the school and the youth benefited from the Strawberry Research Project.

Research Project to Provide Answers for Beginning Farmers

Have you ever wondered how young and beginning farmers get their start in agriculture? Staff in Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and Winnebago Counties have been involved in a Young and Beginning Farmer Research Project for the last year with Community & Economic Development Specialist Dr. Joseph Malual.

The goal of the project is to assess how young and beginning farmers leverage startup resources, identify potential market niches, and to examine challenges and opportunities to increase production and expand market. Additionally, the study serves as an outreach for Extension to establish connections with farmers to deliver educational programs.

As part of the project, Program Coordinator Jen Schultz has been interviewing participants throughout the area. Participants have included agriculture businesses in dairy cows and goats, meat processing, specialty crop growers, traditional crop growers, beef, egg production, wedding venues, agritourism, community-supported agriculture (CSA), wineries, orchards and more.

After the interviews are finished, the data will be analyzed and aggregated by Dr. Malual. Information will be shared with appropriate organizations and other stakeholders to assist with the development of effective responses to farmers' needs. It will also help to identify opportunities to increase production, expand markets and increase farm income.



REACHING OUT TO SUPPORT CHILDCARE WORKERS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

Freeport SNAP-Ed Coordinator Barb Curry and Stephenson County Program Coordinator Nikki Keltner helped with the AOK All Our Kids Network ‘Refresh’ program on March 22. This self-care-themed event had two options for childcare workers—virtual and in-person. The free event was well-attended with many participants feeling relaxed and appreciated.

Master Gardener volunteers were also on hand to help at stations where participants could make a dried flower sachet and pot a house plant. Other stations hosted by program partners included a guided walk, intro to journaling, yoga for beginners, guided breathing and more.



PROGRAM LEADS TO HEALTHY DISCUSSION ABOUT ATTRACTING AND RETAINING YOUNG ADULTS IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Ever wondered what your community could do to reverse outmigration of young adults? Almost every rural county in Illinois has experienced its youngest and brightest talent moving away and unfortunately, the trend appears to be continuing.

‘Reversing the Exodus: Strategies for Attracting & Retaining Young Adults in Rural Communities’ provided great discussion on this pattern. The University of Illinois Extension and the Greater Freeport Partnership hosted the program on Tuesday, April 5 in Freeport to discuss several research-based strategies that communities can implement to help reverse the trend. Several people were in attendance and included some from surrounding communities.

COMMUNITY RECYCLING EVENT GIVES OPPORTUNITY TO PROPERLY DISPOSE OF UNWANTED ITEMS

The annual electronics recycling event held in August was well attended by residents in Stephenson County. The event was held in partnership with the Stephenson County Health Department, U of I Extension office and the City of Freeport. Volunteers from various organizations helped sort the dropped off electronics.

Residents of Stephenson County were encouraged to participate in donating their broken or unwanted electronics. Electronics collected included computers, monitors, televisions, printers, scanners, DVD players, video game consoles, satellite receivers, electronic keyboards and more.



EXTENSION CONTINUES TO SERVE THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY BY PROVIDING TRAININGS IN REAL COLORS CURRICULUM

Extension has provided Real Colors training to many organizations and groups of all ages over the years. Real Colors is a personality type assessment that focuses on understanding communication and human behavior. The training is useful to groups and teams, providing a look at “why we do the things we do and why others do what they do.”

County Director Margaret Larson, a certified NCTI trainer, facilitates trainings for various organizations. In 2022, she presented a training for Midwest Packaging and Container in September as part of their staff retreat. In October, she facilitated the Real Colors training for the Rockford Chamber of Commerce’s Leadership Rockford program, leading 60 individuals through the process.



SCHOOL NUTRITION TRAINING—SETTING UP LOCAL DISTRICTS FOR SUCCESS IN THE CAFETERIA

Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold teams up with SNAP-Ed Educator Carol Erickson every August to offer ABCs of School Nutrition, free continuing education courses for area school staff. Through a partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), U of I Extension staff offered the program this year at three local sites. This program is funded by ISBE and USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP.



14
School Districts participated in 2022



34
People participated in 2022



Want to learn more about ABCs of School Nutrition
go.illinois.edu/abc

I MADE THAT PROGRAM FOCUSES ON YOUTH

In 2020, Nutrition and Wellness Educators Diane Reinhold and Kristin Bogdonas co-authored the I MADE That program to increase awareness about healthy lifestyles and Illinois youth and 4-H programming opportunities. This twelve-session, make-and-take educational program was offered every other month for two years. The program included information on healthy lifestyles, fun activities for youth and families, healthy recipes emphasizing food safety, and information on upcoming 4-H activities.



322
Youth participated from Unit 1 over the two years

“One of the important aspects of this program is that it brings families together—it allows families to work together and build interpersonal skills and togetherness in the kitchen.”

Diane Reinhold
Nutrition and Wellness Educator

CERTIFIED FOOD PROTECTION MANAGER’S COURSE

Diane Reinhold, nutrition and wellness educator, offered the Certified Food Protection Manager’s course in Freeport and in Galena during the month of March. This two-day certification is designed to teach individuals to safely handle, produce, package, and store food products intended for sale to the public and is based on the FDA Food Code.



48
People participated in 2022

A wide variety of individuals may attend the class including farmers market vendors, a small business owner, a home baker, or volunteers from food pantries, church groups, and other service organizations. Staff from restaurants, grocery stores, childcare centers, and schools also attend this course.

WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM EMPOWERS PARTICIPANTS

Reinhold is working with other Nutrition Educators and researchers from the University of Illinois to offer the Empower Weight Loss Program. This free, two-year virtual program incorporates lifestyle, nutrition, and behavioral health education, empowering participants to create a personalized diet plan based on targeted levels of protein and fiber to promote weight loss.



For info about Empower Weight Loss Program visit
<https://publish.illinois.edu/empower-uiuc/get-involved/>



PRESSURE CANNER GAUGE TESTING AVAILABLE

Over time, a dial gauge’s calibration on a pressure canner needs to be tested for inaccuracies. It’s recommended that gauges be tested once a year, as incorrect pressure during the canning process can cause bacteria and harmful toxins to build up and cause illness or death. Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold tests these gauges for free throughout the year at all three offices—Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties.



35+
Pressure canners tested in 2022



8
Faulty pressure canners were found



HYBRID TRAINING FOR MASTER GARDENERS PROVES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

The Master Gardener program is designed for adults of all ages that desire the opportunity to learn about horticulture and positively impact our local community. In 2022, all three counties offered a hybrid training option to complete the Master Gardener Training Program. Master Gardeners help people find sound management practices for home and urban natural resources, create aesthetically pleasing environments, promote well-being through people-plant interactions and horticultural therapy, and contribute to a safe, abundant food supply through home fruit and vegetable production.

EDUCATIONAL EVENTS KEEP LOCAL RESIDENTS UP TO DATE

U of I Extension staff along with Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists plan five horticulture events throughout the three counties. These local educational events feature presentations from speakers across the Midwest, innovative and new ideas for your plants and gardens, as well as the latest information about pest and weed management and how to overcome other horticulture challenges. Often, there are break-out sessions as well as opportunities to make and take a project home. Events include: Winter Trails, Joys of Gardening, Spring Break Gardening, and Hort for the Holidays. These events are well-attended and give the opportunity for fellow gardening enthusiasts to interact with others.



Stay up-to-date on events at facebook.com/NorthwestIllinoisHorticulture



MASTER GARDENERS VOLUNTEER TIME AND KNOWLEDGE

Master Gardeners volunteer their time in many different ways. Creating and managing public gardens may be the most recognized, but you can find them sharing information and promoting the Master Gardener program in booths at public events, answering questions through the Helpline and even helping organize and teach horticulture events sponsored by the Extension office.



130 Master Gardeners
in Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and
Winnebago Counties



4,759 hours of service
by Master Gardener volunteers

MASTER NATURALIST PROGRAM PROVIDES AWARENESS, INSPIRES AND EDUCATES

Master Naturalists facilitate conservation and restoration in the community as well as educate others about natural resources. In 2022, Master Naturalists hosted the Winter Trails Event as well as a meeting in July. At the July meeting, Master Naturalists had the opportunity to learn more about Nature at the Confluence, an urban environmental learning center in South Beloit.



43 Master Naturalists

in Jo Daviess, Stephenson, and Winnebago Counties



1,749 hours of service

by Master Naturalist volunteers



HELPLINE ANSWERS HOME GARDENING QUESTIONS

Throughout the growing season, U of I Extension Master Gardeners in all three counties staff a helpline desk. These experts donate their time and are just a phone call or email away. They provide research-based resources to homeowners that have questions about their lawn or garden. The most popular questions for 2022 included tree and lawn care.



over 350 questions

answered by volunteers in 2022



PLANT-A-ROW INITIATIVE IN WINNEBAGO COUNTY CONTINUES TO BE SUCCESSFUL

Led by U of I Extension Master Gardener volunteers in Winnebago County, Plant-A-Row for the Hungry is a nationwide program designed to encourage home gardeners to donate extra produce to those less fortunate. The donated produce helps to meet the increasing demands of local food pantries. There are several drop-off locations throughout the Rockford area where home gardeners can drop off their surplus garden produce including fruits and vegetables. This year marks 21 years that Winnebago County Master Gardeners have participated.



over 1,400 pounds of fresh produce

donated to Winnebago County local pantries

MASTER GARDENERS WIN STATE AWARDS

Master Gardeners from Stephenson and Winnebago Counties took home awards from the annual State Master Gardener Conference in September.

Stephenson County volunteers: Robert McDonald, Mary Beth Smith, Joan Oliver, Clay Schroll, Mary Blair, Cheryl King, Debbie Schwartz, Jean Korte, Karen Valkema, Pam Hoffman and Carol Pinter were recognized for their hard work and dedication by receiving the State Master Gardener Teamwork Award for their dedication to creating and maintaining demonstration gardens in Freeport's Krape Park.

Two longtime Winnebago County Master Gardeners received Outstanding Master Gardener Awards. Ron Hendrickson has been a Master Gardener since 2009 and has been active in a number of projects in the county, including work in the Sinnissippi Gardens Rose Garden and in the Master Gardener Book Club. Ann Somers completed training in 2012 and since then has volunteered in many local projects, most notably at Klehm Arboretum and Midway Village Gardens as well as the Plant a Row for the Hungry project and the Gardening for Food, Flowers and Fun committee.





On January 16, 4-H members met for a Ski Day at Chestnut Mountain. Over 60 youth from all three counties made it out for a fun day on the slopes!

Activities for Youth Held Year-Round

Extension staff are busy planning activities and events year round for youth. Local 4-H clubs meet monthly keeping youth engaged and learning. Youth leadership groups also meet monthly in each county as well to continue developing leadership skills.



Find 4-H on Facebook, search **University of Illinois Extension- Jo Daviess/ Stephenson/ Winnebago 4-H**



STEPHENSON YOUTH WINS STATE PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

Public Speaking Contests were held in all three counties in March and April. Farm Bureau helped with both the workshops and the contests. Youth had the opportunity to choose from four divisions: Formal Speech, Illustrated Speech, Original Work and Oral Interpretation. Stephenson County's Michelle Marck went on to compete at the State Contest in early May and brought home first place in Oral Interpretation.



PROJECT DAYS ARE A GREAT WAY TO INTRODUCE YOUTH TO WHAT 4-H IS ALL ABOUT

In the spring, Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties all held project days in which youth had the opportunity to explore the many project areas available through the 4-H program. Youth partook in hands-on activities, learned about various projects, and created small items and/or food using recipes or directions.

NATURE EXPLORERS LEARN HOW TO MONITOR WATER QUALITY

Nature Explorers in Jo Daviess County created a food web, learned how to record water quality of a river and learned how to test water turbidity during one of their spring gatherings.



The Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation has partnered with Extension to give youth this opportunity to spark excitement about nature, environmental stewardship, and citizen science.



YOUTH HELP PLANT OAK TREES IN APRIL

Youth in Stephenson and Winnebago Counties partnered with the Illinois Soil and Water Conservation Districts to plant trees in both counties in early April. Each county planted 25 oak trees to help rebuild the native ecosystem with a savanna.



EVERYTHING ART CLUB SPARKS LOVE FOR CREATIVE ARTS

The Jo Daviess County 'Everything Art' club focuses on a different creative arts area every meeting. Local experts have led sessions on cake decorating, flower arranging, photography, sewing and more. Youth get hands-on experience in this fun and interactive program.



BASS FISHING CLUB CATCHES ATTENTION OF LOCAL YOUTH

Winnebago youth had the opportunity to learn about the sport of fishing with a specific focus on largemouth bass in June. Lessons focused on aquatic ecosystems; fish biology; and included STEM activities relating to fishing gear. Time to fish was included at Torstenson's pond.



LOCAL YOUTH WIN BIG AT ROBOTICS COMPETITION

Stephenson County Youth Robotics Club, A2=B2+C2 Team, took home the Champion Award of the Rookie Division in April at the 4-H SpaceBot Mission Command Challenge Robotics Competition held at the McLean County Fairgrounds. They were also named the Best Table Performance Award. The team has been meeting since January to prepare by building and programming two robots. Together they completed teamwork activities while learning the basics of programming, engineering, and design. Trouble-shooting and critical thinking were important skills used to master their robots.



YOUTH MAKE MEMORIES AT 4-H CAMP

Northern Illinois Summer Day Camp was held in mid June at the Rock River Christian Camp in Polo. Older members had been preparing for the three-days of camp with meetings on counselor training. Youth from all three counties enjoyed the day camp activities designed to challenge, educate and entertain.





On June 11, Winnebago County 4-H held the annual Chalk the Walk with 7 clubs participating. 4-H members really let their colorful creativity come to life in the parking lot!

VOLUNTEERS INDUCTED INTO HALL OF FAME

The Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame recognizes 4-H volunteers that have a track record of exemplary service to 4-H or outstanding career and community achievement and are nominated by either county staff or by the Illinois 4-H Foundation Board. This year, three volunteers were named to the Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame for their leadership and mentoring roles. Volunteers honored for their dedication to the 4-H program included:



Jo Daviess:
Goldie Foley



Stephenson:
Dean Kuper



Winnebago:
Kathy Koning-McClure



JO DAVIESS YOUTH COMPETES TO LAUNCH REAL-WORLD SPACE MISSION IN NATIONAL COMPETITION

Riley Bourquin was one of 13 chosen as delegates from Illinois in a three-day competition at the Kennedy Space Center in July. The competition focused on designing experiments that could make it to orbit on the International Space Station using hands-on experience with STEM experts. The winning team's experiment would be conducted by real astronauts in 2023.

YOUTH SHOW OFF THEIR HARD WORK AT COUNTY 4-H SHOWS

Youth exhibited projects at the county 4-H Shows in July and early August. There are over 60 project categories for youth to choose from to exhibit at the 4-H Show.



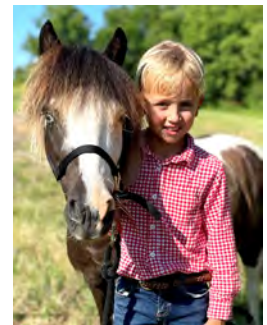
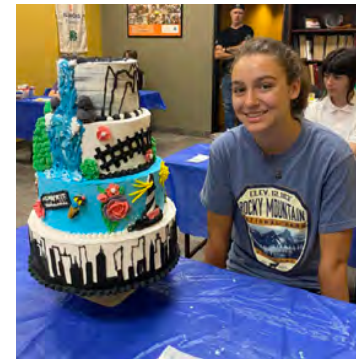
Youth in 4-H Shows

Jo Daviess: 141 youth exhibited
Stephenson: 224 youth exhibited
Winnebago: 201 youth exhibited



Entries for 4-H Shows

Jo Daviess: 500+ projects
Stephenson: 1,577 projects
Winnebago: 733 projects



Selected youth from all three counties went on to compete at the Illinois State Fair with their projects.



PEARL CITY STUDENTS PARTAKE IN STEM ACTIVITIES

Creative thinking, hands-on problem solving, critical reasoning—these are just some of the skills seventh and eighth grade students at Pearl City Middle School used on April 29. Staff from the University of Illinois Extension brought four different STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) activities for students to learn from.



BABYSITTING CLINICS HELP YOUTH LEARN SAFE PRACTICES

Babysitting Clinics were held in Jo Daviess and Stephenson Counties in early June. Participants gained leadership and decision-making skills, learned the behaviors of different age groups of children and how to manage them. Participants also learned about choking prevention and received First Aid training.



AREA YOUTH BECOME SPELLBOUND WITH 4-H FUN

Wizarding World returned to all three counties at the end of June and early July for local youth. Youth moved through different stations where they were able to have fun with others, get creative and learn hands-on through various STEM activities.



WEE-NATS BRINGS THE OUTDOORS TO LITTLE ONES

Young children ages 4-7 discover the outdoors in this monthly program led by Educator Kelly Lafferty. Wee Naturalists is a monthly interactive program that includes a different environmental topic with a story, activity, craft and hike.



In September, Educator Kelly Lafferty participated in the Fall Family Fun Day at a Boy Scout Camp. She brought activities for Scouts to learn about different insects.



KEEPERS OF THE LAND EVENT FOCUSES ON ENVIRONMENT AND NATURE

The keepers of the land event gathered 246 Stephenson County third graders at Oakdale Nature Preserve in October to learn about the environment and nature. U of I staff partnered with several entities and had presenters from local organizations that helped make this event successful.





STRAWBERRY RESEARCH TESTS NEW VARIETIES

This May began the start of a 2-year strawberry research project for Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Grant McCarty. Funded by the Illinois Department of Agriculture's USDA Specialty Crops Block Grant, the research will examine the suitability of growing day-neutral strawberries. Currently, strawberry growers grow June-bearing strawberries which are perennial plants that require an establishment year (no berries) before yielding the following years.

Day-neutral strawberries are grown as an annual. They are planted in May and begin yielding mid-August to Halloween. They are not overwintered and are removed. By moving harvest out of June and eliminating the challenges of overwintering, these berries could be a compliment to established apple orchards, U-Pick operations, farmers markets, and other avenues.

Three varieties are being researched in Jo Daviess and Stephenson counties. Each site incorporates the practices of that grower. One is a traditional u-pick June-bearing strawberries with apples in the fall while another is a CSA vegetable subscription and farmers market vendor. These partners, Terrapin Orchards and Freeport High School Vegetable Farm program, will allow us to better make recommendations for two different types of growers. Further, these partnerships allow for grower feedback. Yields, flavor, labor, budgets, pest observations, and other data are recorded. This study will continue in 2023.

PLENTY OF LOCAL FOODS AND SMALL FARM PROGRAMMING FOR EVERYONE

The winter months are a great time for educational opportunities directed to backyard and commercial growers. McCarty offered several programs to help stakeholders grow new varieties, adopt best practices, and prepare for the upcoming growing season.

Winter saw the return of the popular Intro to Fruit Tree Pruning class led by McCarty. It was held in-person as well as virtually. Since 2017, this class has been held 2-3 times every winter and provides participants skills in pruning fruit trees.

McCarty was also a guest speaker at both Extension programs, Joys of Gardening (Freeport) and Gardening for Food, Fun, & Flowers (Rockford).

One of the resources that enhances these in-person classes are archived versions found on the YouTube channel. As many of the 2022 in-person programs were also delivered virtually in 2021, this has been an added bonus for presentations this year. In addition, those unable to attend in-person or those who missed the program are able to access these recordings.



For recordings and other instructional videos, visit go.illinois.edu/JSWYouTube

NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY PROGRAMMING THAT COUNTS

Natural Resources, Environment and Energy Educator Stanley (Jay) Solomon led several in-person programs locally and statewide covering the core concepts of soil health, invasive and problematic weeds, radon, renewable energy, geothermal energy and rainscaping within the communities.

DRIFTLESS REGION BEEF CONFERENCE CONTINUES TO BE A SUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE

Solomon plays a large role in organizing the tri-state beef cattle conference. This two-day conference focuses brings together beef producers for an educational program that focuses on production needs and timely topics from Extension specialists in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin.



PARTICIPANTS LEARN ABOUT CHAINSAW SAFETY IN CLASS

Basic chainsaw operation, simple maintenance, and chainsaw safety, as well as the 5-step felling plan and safe cutting techniques were covered during a three day Chainsaw Safety Course. University of Illinois Extension Forestry Specialist Jay Hayek led the program at the Oakdale Nature Preserve in Freeport in early June. The course was co-sponsored by the Northwest Illinois Forestry Association.



For more information about Forestry, visit <https://extension.illinois.edu/forestry>

LIVESTOCK TRAININGS HELD THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS

Certified Livestock Manager Trainings are held every winter throughout Illinois. Jay Solomon, educator for natural resources, environment & energy, along with Nesli Akdeniz, clinical assistant professor and Extension faculty specialist, co-lead the program. In January and February, the program was delivered in eight locations. Solomon and Akdeniz also updated the online training and added a Spanish translated option to the Certified Livestock Manager test for 2022.

“This training program is not only required for large livestock facilities, but it also provides best practice updates—especially environmental practices such as manure management.”

Stanley (Jay) Solomon
Natural Resources, Environment & Energy
Educator



TEST PLOTS

Ever wonder what it's like to watch plants grow? That's exactly what Phillip Alberti, U of I Extension Commercial Agriculture Educator does. Alberti visits the field crop test plots in Stephenson County weekly throughout the growing season and keeps records for various studies. The plots are part of a partnership between University of Illinois Extension and the Highland Community College and located nearby just outside of Freeport.

You can find the weekly crop reports online at <https://farmdoc.illinois.edu/field-crop-production>. University of Illinois Extension has several test plots throughout the state for various studies including corn and soybean population studies, corn rootworm evaluation as well as corn and soybean variety trials. Some of the plots are here in Stephenson County on the Highland Community College campus. Commercial Agriculture Educator Phillip Alberti keeps tabs on the plots throughout the growing season and keeps records for the various studies.



Find weekly crop reports online
go.illinois.edu/Farmdoc

MIDWEST HEMP DATABASE

Assisting commercial crop producers is the main focus for Northern Illinois Commercial Agriculture Educator Phillip Alberti. Alberti's expertise includes soil fertility, production systems and industrial hemp.

Phillip Alberti, commercial agriculture educator, has been at the forefront of creating the Midwestern Hemp Database, a research project started in 2020. The project is a collaboration of Midwest Universities, testing laboratories, and growers creating a network to provide research-backed, regional insight into agronomic performance and cannabinoid development of industrial hemp varieties.



For more info about the Midwest Hemp Database, visit
go.illinois.edu/hempdatabase



EXTENSION PARTNERS WITH HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOR CROP RESEARCH FIELD DAY

On August 24, Commercial Agriculture Educator Phillip Alberti, along with other U of I Educators, presented on topics such as crop and disease updates as well as demonstrated various drone technologies to local students and area farmers. Alberti and Highland Agriculture Instructor Justin Ebert discussed the many research trials conducted on site. Industry professionals were also on-hand to give information about their products.

COMMERCIAL AGRICULTURE CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

While the Northwest Illinois Agronomy Summit wasn't able to be held in January, Alberti managed to have all of the presentations recorded and added to the YouTube website. Specialists from University of Illinois and University of Wisconsin delivered strategies for weed, pest, disease and nutrient management.

With over 60 attendees, the Crops Management Conference held in nearby Dekalb County in February was a very successful program. Speakers from University of Illinois and University of Wisconsin filled out a day of continuing education for Certified Crop Advisors and growers.



For recordings and other instructional videos, visit
go.illinois.edu/JSWYouTube






EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS HELP LIMITED INCOME HOUSEHOLDS FOCUS ON HEALTHY DIETS

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Education) Community Workers Barb Curry and Terre McGee have continued educational classes in Freeport and Rockford. Together they have helped limited income households focus on healthy diets as well as reached youth in local schools and at after-school programs.



SNAP-Education Program Coordinator Gina Adams continues to offer support and outreach to community partners including distributing printed materials, providing resources to address food access and healthy nutrition options, providing recipe cards and calendars for partners to distribute to clients.

Carol Erickson is an Extension Educator with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Education). As the SNAP-Education Educator, she works with local organizations to promote healthier settings and food choices. Through community engagement and collaboration, Erickson is working on making environmental and systems changes that make choosing healthy food the “easy” option.

SNAP-Education Community Partnerships

-  17
K-12 Schools
-  5
Early Childhood Centers
-  35
Other types of organizations
-  4
Emergency Food Sites

Reach and Impact of SNAP-Education

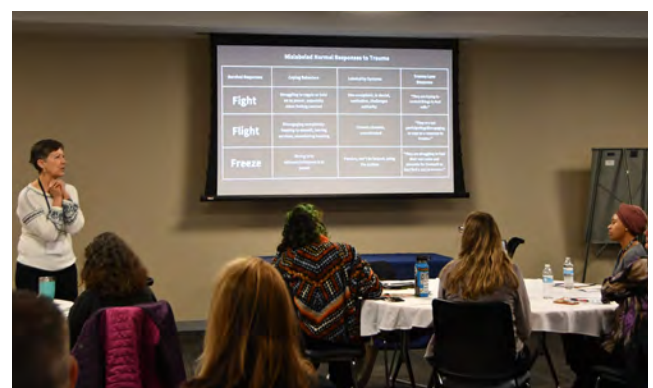
-  25,795
Total Estimated Reach
-  619
Number of Nutrition Education Classes Provided

COLLABORATION ADDRESSES FOOD INSECURITY AND IMPACT ON HEALTH

SNAP-Education Educator Carol Erickson finally had the opportunity to present at a conference that she helped plan for 2020, but was delayed due to COVID.



The Hunger & Health Illinois Regional Conference was held on March 9 in Ogleby and March 17 in Springfield. These regional events created a collaboration among local and regional organizations to address food insecurity and its impact on health. Erickson developed two of the four breakout session topics, presented on them in Ogleby and moderated them in Springfield: ‘Connecting to Local Produce’ and ‘Nutrition Policy.’



-  165
Attendees
-  42
Counties represented



CREATE BETTER HEALTH CURRICULUM OPENS NEW AVENUES IN ADULT EDUCATION

Create Better Health (CBH) targets SNAP-Ed eligible adult audiences that are in group homes, independent living, and some HUD housing locations. CBH has a unique emphasis on improving food resource management using “Create” concepts. This teaches participants how to use foods they already have in their kitchen to make a variety of nourishing meals through hands-on recipe demonstrations.



SNAP-ED EDUCATOR ERICKSON PITCHES IN TO HELP WITH NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

The Neighborhood Initiative was a new program started this year in Rockford based on addressing needs and concerns in six communities. These communities were chosen based on high crime rates, unemployed/underemployed, and diverse median property values below \$50,000. The neighborhood events were held between April and September. In the morning, city employees and community volunteers helped clean up litter, trimmed trees, installed smoke alarms and provided minor home repairs. In the afternoon, community partners and city departments were available to connect residents with resources.

SNAP-Ed Educator Carol Erickson provided information about accessing healthy food in the community through the Find Food IL website, local food pantries, information about neighborhood gardens, farmers markets that accept SNAP and WIC, handing out vegetable seeds and informing about summer youth meal sites.



ILLINOIS JUNIOR CHEFS

SNAP-Ed Community Workers Barb Curry (in Stephenson County) and Terre McGee (in Winnebago County) led Illinois Junior Chef classes targeting youth ages 8 to 13 years old. Throughout each of the five, 2-hour sessions at each location, the focus was on select food groups and related cooking skills. Recipes let participants practice specific cooking skills for preparation of foods highlighted in each lesson as well as have the opportunity to taste test several recipes and fruits and vegetables.



VIRTUAL NUTRITION PROGRAM OFFERED FOR FAMILIES

Stephenson County SNAP-Ed Community Worker Barb Curry presented a virtual nutrition program on April 21 to over 90 families. This hour-long program was sponsored by the Regional Office of Education and focused around family meal time with the goal of learning the importance of working together to create healthy, affordable, and easy to make meals for the entire family.



Staff Recognition

BREUER AND LAFFERTY JOIN EXTENSION

In 2022, two new staff members joined Extension. Holly Breuer joined in February as the Office Support Assistant in Jo Daviess County and Kelly Lafferty joined in July as the 4-H Youth Development Educator serving Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties.



Holly Breuer



Kelly Lafferty

As the Office Support Assistant, Breuer serves as the Jo Daviess office receptionist. She is responsible for supporting various office activities and providing program support in Jo Daviess County.

With the title of 4-H Youth Development Educator, Lafferty will create programming, train volunteers, and lead youth trainings in topics such as leadership, STEM, and natural resources. Lafferty will partner with youth serving agencies and local schools to assist with trainings, events and other activities.



McGEE RECEIVES INDIVIDUAL EXCELLENCE IN OUTSTANDING PROGRAMMING AWARD

SNAP-Ed Community Outreach Worker Terre McGee received the Individual Excellence in Outstanding Programming Award in October. McGee was nominated by her fellow co-workers for going above and beyond in reaching targeted audiences, and in her program delivery. She was presented with the honor at the Illinois Nutrition Education Programs conference in Champaign, IL. McGee was one of three individuals within the state to receive the award this year.

“I am pleased to see Terre recognized on the state level for the work she has done in Rockford. She is an important part of my SNAP team,” adds Winnebago County Director Margaret Larson. As a Community Outreach Worker in Rockford, McGee teaches classes and provides information to local community members (adults and youth) in basic nutrition, food safety, physical activity, and food budgeting for low-income individuals and families within the Rockford area.

U OF I EXTENSION RECOGNIZES STAFF FOR YEARS OF SERVICE

Five staff members were recognized for their years of service with Extension in Unit 1. Acknowledged for five years of service were: Alex Burbach, Jo Daviess County Program Coordinator; and Theresa McGee, Rockford SNAP-ED Community Worker Coordinator. 10 years: Deb Koch, Office Support Specialist. 15 years: Nikki Keltner, Stephenson County Program Coordinator. 25 years: Barbara Curry, Freeport SNAP-ED Community Worker.



Alex Burbach



Theresa McGee



Deb Koch

“We are fortunate to have dedicated staff that want to help make a difference in our local communities,” says Margaret Larson, County Director for Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties. “Alex, Theresa, Deb, Nikki and Barbara are great examples of our Extension team. Their willingness to help others and advocate for education are the very reasons Extension is successful.”



Nikki Keltner

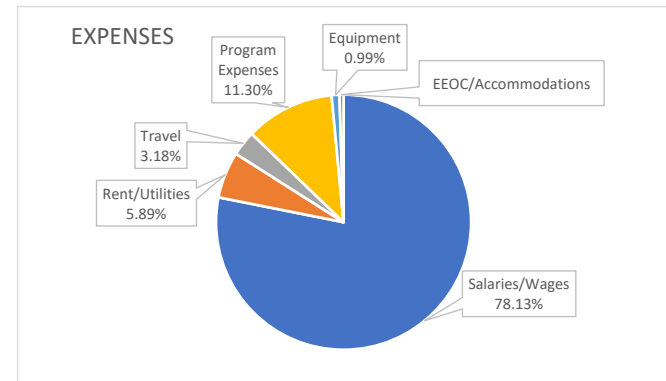
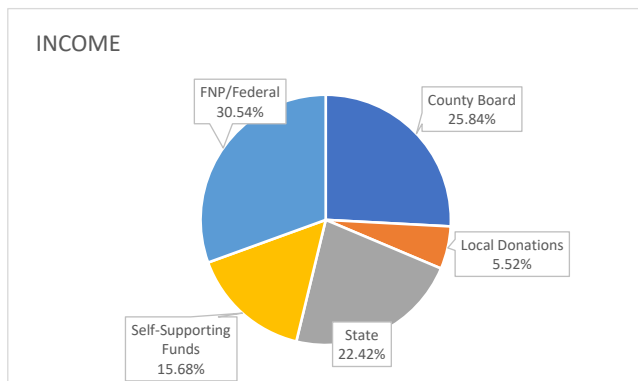


Barbara Curry

Finances

We are fortunate to have financial support from five local entities with whom we partner: The Boone-Winnebago Farm Bureau, the Jo Daviess County Extension and 4-H Foundation, the Stephenson County 4-H and Extension Foundation, the Winnebago County 4-H Showboard, and the Winnebago County 4-H and Extension Foundation.

The Showboard and the Foundations are led by volunteers with a commitment to supporting 4-H and Extension activities and although their role on the boards is focused on fundraising in support of us, they are most often tireless champions of the work of Extension and 4-H in our communities, and many hold additional volunteer roles.



Staff

Margaret Larson
County Extension Director

Carol Erickson
Educator, SNAP-ED

Kelly Lafferty
Educator, 4-H Youth Development

Grant McCarty
Educator, Local Foods & Small Farms

Diane Reinhold
Educator, Nutrition & Wellness

Stanley (Jay) Solomon
Educator, Natural Resources, Environment & Energy

Rebecca Gocken
Program Coordinator, 4-H Winnebago County

Brenda Heimann
Program Coordinator, 4-H Stephenson County

Angela Miller
Program Coordinator, 4-H Jo Daviess County

Nikki Keltner
Program Coordinator, Stephenson County

Alex Burbach
Program Coordinator, Jo Daviess County

Jen Schultz
Program Coordinator, Unit

Gina Adams
Program Coordinator, SNAP-ED, Rockford

Barbara Curry
Community Worker, SNAP-ED, Freeport

Theresa McGee
Community Worker, SNAP-ED, Rockford

Deb Koch
Office Support Specialist, Unit

Julie Miller
Office Support Assistant, Stephenson County

Tammy Bené
Office Support Associate, Winnebago County

Holly Breuer
Office Support Assistant, Jo Daviess County

Extension Council

The Extension Council is an advisory group that meets four times a year and provides information and feedback to the Extension Director. Council members are from each county and are invited to serve on multi-year terms. The composition of the Extension Council closely reflects the counties they represent. Our council members may be our biggest champions but more importantly serve as representatives of their communities and advocates for Extension success.

Jo Daviess County

Ray Massingill
Warren, IL

Garnet Fee
Galena, IL

Robert Heuermann
Stockton, IL

Cody Koester
Shullsburg, WI

Amy Hardwicke
Galena, IL

Drew Groezinger
Stockton, IL

Stephenson County

Deborah Lischwe
Freeport, IL

Tom Scheider
Freeport, IL

Ethan Trampel
Rock City, IL

Chris Urish
Freeport, IL

Sheila Keene
Lena, IL

Kevyn-Ann Sutter
Freeport, IL

Winnebago County

Angie Goral
Rockford, IL

Jim Webster
Rockton, IL

Aaron Booker
Winnebago, IL

Lori Walsh
Rockford, IL

Mia Chase
Loves Park, IL

Sue Gallant
Leaf River, IL

Dan Obert
Roscoe, IL

Constance McCarthy
Machesney Park, IL

Ann Somers
Rockford, IL

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Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.
University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, please contact the event coordinator. Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet your needs.

The Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP).

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