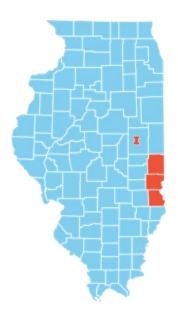




Stacy Woodyard County Director



# A note from the County Director

As we reflect on the past year, we are filled with a sense of pride and gratitude for the incredible service that we have been able to provide to our community. It has been a year filled with dedication, hard work, and a shared commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

Throughout the year, we have had the opportunity to embark on various projects and initiatives that have allowed us to address important issues, meet critical needs, and make a lasting impact. From providing essential resources to those in need to organizing new spark initiatives that promote unity and inclusivity, every service we have performed has been guided by our unwavering dedication to serving others.

We have witnessed firsthand the power of coming together as a community to create positive change. It is through the collective efforts of our staff, volunteers, donors, and supporters that we have been able to achieve our goals and make a difference in the lives of so many.

As we look toward the future, we are excited to continue our work and build upon the successes of the past year. Together, we can continue to make a meaningful impact, support those in need, and create a stronger, more resilient community for all.

We are immensely grateful for the opportunity to serve and for the incredible support that we have received from our community. Your dedication, generosity, and commitment have been instrumental in our success, and we could not have achieved all that we have without you.

Thank you for standing with us, believing in our mission, and supporting our efforts to create positive change. We look forward to continuing this journey together and making an even greater impact in the year ahead.

Stacy Woodyard County Extension Director

Cover photo: Mary Liz Wright, nutrition and wellness educator, helping a student crack an egg during a Cooking 101 class.



# Illinois Extension Makes an Impact

The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's land-grant mission thrives each day through Extension's programs, resources, knowledge, and dedicated staff that are responsive to five grand challenge themes:



#### Community:

Support Strong and Resilient Residents



## Economy:

**Grow a Prosperous Economy** 



#### **Environment:**

Sustain Natural Resources at Home and in Public Spaces



#### Food:

Maintain a Safe and Accessible Food Supply



#### Health:

Maximize Physical, Mental, and Emotional Health

2023 Engagement

Extension leaders, staff, and stakeholders define priorities that create meaningful, mission-centered outcomes throughout the state:

657 Communities Served	<b>745K+</b> Program Attendees	12.7M+ Webpage Views	58.5M+ Social Media Impressions	1.8M+ YouTube Views
555 Educational Sessions/Week (28K+ Annually)	90 Online Courses Accessed by 12K+ People	10,158 Local Government Education Webinar Reach	1,799 4-H Clubs	199,400 4-H Experiences

# **Partnerships**

## **Resource Generation**

5,682
Program
Volunteers

274 Community Gardens 2,634
School and
Community
Partners

\$15,259,785 Value of Volunteer Contributions \$463,368

Value of Donated

Produce Grown or

Facilitated

\$4M+ External Funds Secured for SNAP-Ed Partners





# Oblong Children's Christian Home

The Oblong Children's Christian Home is a residence offering a safe place for healing and treatment for boys and girls suffering from previous emotional trauma. The home is open to youth 5-16 years old. It provides them with a stable environment in a family-style group home. The Children's Home first opened in the 1960s when David and Myrtle Deatherage donated their home and 60 acres to area churches in Crawford County. The initial idea was to create a Christian service camp for the area. After identifying the area had several camps, the churches came together and considered the needs that existed. From this conversation, they realized there was no place for troubled or abused children to go.

The goal of the Oblong Children's Christian Home is to reunite children with their families. The length of stay for each child living there is how long it takes the child and their families to achieve the goals that were set when arriving at the facility. The home also works with parents and other siblings to teach parenting skills and provide counseling.



Savannah Caruth, Dakota Caruth, Isabella Smith, and Jamie Blankenship participating in fairground clean up.

The first tri-level home was built in 1974, and since then, the Children's Home has built several other homes for the children, as well as an indoor horse-riding facility and a new school building for their school, New Life Academy. In 2023, the home held its first horse show at the indoor riding facility. The youth invited the community to attend, where they could showcase the many things they learned while participating in 4-H, riding, and horse therapy offered at the home.



Sahaj Dhillon, Marieyah Rollins, Jamie Blankenship, and Phillip White exhibited their rabbits at the fair.

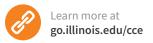
2023 was also the year 4-H became a part of their community. After many years of trying to form a club with the Oblong Christian Children's Home, Crawford County 4-H is now a part of their community. After making a connection with former 4-H member Brady Hall, who is currently an administrator at the home, Crawford County 4-H Program Coordinator April Knoblett was able to show the administrators, house parents, and youth what all 4-H has to offer. At this time, we have reached 14 youths from the Oblong Children's Christian Home. We hope to keep expanding that number. All 14 youth chose at least one project, and all exhibited at the Crawford County 4-H shows.

The excitement these youth have is outstanding. They are excited to be a part of something bigger, something that gives them opportunities to try new things, meet new people, and, most importantly, give them a chance to be who they are with the confidence to reach their goals. This is more than we could have ever hoped for when we walked in the door the first day. Our goal is to keep expanding their presence in the 4-H program and get them more involved in local, unit, and state events.

Alex Lopes was a standout at the Crawford County Fair this year. He took his Crops Innovation project to the Illinois State Fair, where he was named Grand Champion in his division. Lexi and Dakota Caruth were both successful during the 4-H Rabbit Show at the Crawford County Fair this year in their showmanship classes. The members are becoming more confident with their horse projects, and we hope that they will exhibit at the Crawford County 4-H Shows in 2024.



Callen Robinson getting ready for the horse show.





# New Sparks for 4-H: Building a fiery passion in our youth

Ready. Set. GO! Just like that we took off. Creating new experiences and opportunities for our 4-H members. 4-H uses the term sparks when talking about an interest or passion of youth. Why? Because that spark can ignite into a lifelong learning and even career. We want youth to explore more SPARKS.

# Clark County

Clark County 4-H members participated in their first Master Showmanship Contest. While this contest isn't new for other counties, this was the first year teenage 4-H members could participate in the challenge. Four showmen took up the challenge representing the Grand Champion Senior Showman livestock areas: Dalanee Smith, Senior Goat Showman; Lilie Perry, Senior Beef Showman; Ryland Baird, Senior Swine Showman; and Haylee Higgins, Senior Sheep Showman. These youth performed their best, and ultimately, Lilie Perry was named Master Showman. She represented Clark County at the Illinois Master Showmanship Contest during the Illinois State Fair in August 2023. This showing opportunity offers our members a way to elevate themselves in their passions.



Lilie Perry, Master Showman, 2023, showing off her belt buckle donated by Clark County Farm Bureau.

# **Crawford County**

Crawford County embarked on a new adventure with rabbits and nature by starting two SPecial INterest Clubs. SPIN Clubs are dedicated to a specific project area. In this instance, we had two volunteers who wanted to give our youth a chance at a deeper exploration of their sparks. The Rabbits SPIN Club meets monthly to help members better understand how to show their rabbits, support all of the rabbits' needs, and more. The Nature SPIN meets at the local Sportsman Club to learn more about our environment. For their first lesson, they dived into learning about soil. SPIN Clubs are a great way for youth to explore a deeper understanding of what they love.



# **Edgar County**

If you were in 4-H as a youth, odds are you experienced record books or some type of recording of your animal project. Times have shifted, communities have evolved, and Edgar County 4-H was not immune to this. Prior to 2023, records and awards were not part of the program. When Brittany Smith was hired, she wanted to bring this tradition back. Record keeping is a great life skill to have and can assist later in life when you are doing taxes or completing scholarship applications. There was a great response from the youth, with several submitting their records for the first time.







# Locally

We started a new challenge that caters to those with a culinary spark, and over ten teams across the three counties competed in our first 4-H Food Challenge. This challenge requires teams of youth to create dishes from secret ingredients. No recipes. No assistance. Only pure imagination to complete the dish. Winners from each county competed at the local level competition for the grand prize. Each winner received a kitchen appliance to help them along on their culinary journey.

#### Statewide

At a state level, our new spark was robotics. Multiple teams from our counties went to Bloomington to compete in the Illinois 4-H State Robotics competition. The teams worked hard for many weeks leading up to the challenge to meet the criteria for the themed competition: hydrobot. Some of the challenges included building a bridge and driving their hydrobot around kelp. The challenge was dedicated to the work that conservationists and oceanographers do to help conserve and clean our oceans. While the teams did not place, they did learn a lot about programming robots while continuing to build sparks.

You can see 4-H is constantly creating and offering new opportunities and sparks for our members. This gives them the chance to learn and grow.

Jaylynn Schober

### Nationwide

Nationally, we had a youth from Clark County, Gabe Cervantes, attend IGNITE, a National Youth Summit. The National Youth Summit Series is an immersive experience where youth dive into the issues, expand their career horizons, and grow as leaders while working with and learning from other teens and experts with shared passions. Agriculture, STEM, and Healthy Living tracks converged at this Super Summit held in Washington, DC. Gabe went in the STEM track. He brought back new ideas and experiences that he was able to share with his club and county.

# All aboard! Teenage 4-H youth field trip

It is a fact that 4-H loses youth as they get older. With jobs and sports to compete with, enrollments can be affected. We wanted to address the issue, and we did so through a teen-only field trip. Members from Clark, Crawford, and Edgar counties took a bus to Holiday World. On the way down, they listened to youth from the State leadership Team talk about state 4-H opportunities and leadership groups. Highlighting beyond unit experiences for our youth and ways they can get involved. Once at Holiday World, they had the opportunity to talk to staff about careers in the theme park industry. It was a day balancing learning with fun and a perfect combination to help find new sparks and create more opportunities for our teenage members.



## Canning with confidence

Home food preservation has seen a revival in popularity, and Illinois Extension is at the forefront by providing information on the most up-to-date, safe methods to consumers. The nutrition and wellness educator team has found that consumers respond well to a digital format. In response to several inquiries, the team created a series of short webinars featuring two new preservation methods: steam and electric boiling water bath canners, as well as the traditional pressure canner. The team worked with the communications team to create the "lunch and learn" style webinars, Canning with Confidence, paired with short step-by-step videos. These webinars received the Illinois Extension Interdisciplinary State Team Award for 2023.

In addition to the webinars, What's Cooking with Mary Liz Wright, home food preservation videos continue to be a welcome resource to our stakeholders, with over 125,000 views.

Wright keeps abreast of current science and the most up-todate methods of food presentation by attending professional development opportunities offered by the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

While digital information is very popular and an essential means of education, Wright continues to offer hands-on food preservation workshops in nine counties in 2023. She encourages families to use these workshops as training for 4-H projects or an intergenerational experience.



Nutrition and Wellness Educator Mary Liz Wright helps participants in a jam making workshop.

#### Farm Bureau RFD Radio

Wright has become a regular guest on RFD Today radio with host DeLoss Janke. She has also been featured in the weekly publication Farm Week. Wright offers food safety, budgeting, cooking tips, and information about cottage foods to listeners throughout Illinois.

# So, you want to sell your spaghetti sauce

The Illinois Cottage Food Operation Law allows local farmers and food entrepreneurs to prepare food in their home kitchens to sell at Illinois farmer's markets, fairs, festivals, their homes, and through online sales. It is vital that cottage food operators know how to prepare their products in the safest manner, decreasing the risk of foodborne illness.

Nutrition and Wellness Educators Jenna Smith and Mary Liz Wright worked with Illinois Extension's online learning manager to create the online Cottage Food Operator training course. This course is designed to help cottage food operators follow food safety guidelines and understand the law's complex requirements. Illinois Extension believes that encouraging certification of cottage food vendors through an online course will make great strides toward a safer product. By offering this course online, Illinois Extension can reach people "where they are" and improve the health and safety of the operators and their customers. The course received the Illinois Extension 2023 Technology Excellence Award.

Wright and Smith are the state specialists in the cottage food arena and are the go-to resources for all things cottage food. Wright is deeply involved in the evolution of the cottage food industry in Illinois and serves on the Illinois Farmers Market Association board, the Illinois Farmers Market Safety Guide, and the Cottage Food Guide state committees. Wright has spoken at the Illinois State Master Gardner Conference, the Farm Bureau/Illinois Farmers Market Association Food to Flowers Conference, the Farmers Market Vendor Webinar Series, and other regional and local meetings in person and virtually.

Questions from across the state are directed to Wright and Smith, and multiple times each week, they find themselves speaking with enthusiastic entrepreneurs.

# Clark County Farmers Market

The Clark County Farmers Market entered its second year in 2023. Wright has been involved in the market since its inception and was asked to serve on a committee to plan the first Farm to Table Dinner. As a food safety and cottage food expert, Wright was the perfect choice for this committee. Planning and executing this large event was a welcome challenge that proved a great success. The menu for the dinner featured local products offered at the weekly farmers market. Wright and the committee prepared the food in several courses and served them to patrons who enjoyed the evening immensely. The event was so successful that Wright and the committee have been invited to speak at the 2024 Farm Bureau/Illinois Farmers Market Association Food to Flowers conference in January 2024.



# Teaching lifelong healthy habits

Illinois Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education provides community-based nutrition education for individuals and families. It works within communities to prevent obesity and reduce the risk of chronic disease by making nutritious foods and by active living. This program is known as "Eat. Move. Save." and is delivered by University of Illinois Extension. Results show that IL SNAP-Ed encourages steps toward health and wellness among Illinois residents.

The SNAP-Ed program plays a critical role in helping people who are eligible for SNAP benefits lead healthier lives on a limited budget. SNAP-Ed teaches people how to make their SNAP dollars stretch, shop for and cook healthy meals, and stay physically active. Initiatives include direct nutrition education in communities across the state.

The SNAP-Ed program continues to make a positive impact throughout Illinois by providing nutrition education.

The most important things adults learned:

- · Watched their health and cooked more healthily
- Ate less unhealthy fat after learning about saturated fats
- Ate more fruits and vegetables
- Engage in more physical activity

Meanwhile, SNAP-Ed efforts in schools teach children the importance of fitness and keeping their bodies healthy.

The program provides children and low-income people access to food, a healthy diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.



SNAP-Ed Community Worker Hope Dennis introduces students to her partner, Bob, from the OrganWise Guys program.









Partnerships with K-12 Schools



Partnerships with Emergency Food Sites



Partnerships with Other Types of Organizations



Nutrition Education Classes



Nutrition Education Participants





# Teen Teachers/Cooking 101 at Palestine

Palestine High School Foods 1 and 2 students "measured up" to the challenge. Youth Educator Jaylynn Schober and Crawford 4-H Coordinator April Knoblett paired up with Foods teacher Mrs. Holly Inboden at Palestine High School for a new adventure exploring Teens as Teachers. The classes participated in training, engaging them in how to act, think, and prepare like a teacher. Once they had their training, they put it into practice. Individual sessions were held for third, fourth, and fifth grades. In their sessions, youth learned basic cooking skills such as measuring, cutting, and cooking, as well as their food groups. The goal of these sessions was to help youth feel more empowered and knowledgeable when cooking in a kitchen with the hopes they prepare nutritious meals for their families. Everyone went home with a chef's hat, recipe booklet, and 4-H potholder to start them on their own culinary journey. We cannot wait to see what other adventures these 4-H Teen Teachers provide.



# Cooking 101 at Paris

How often do your youth cook when at home? Once a week? Once a month? Do they cook at all? Illinois Extension partnered with the Paris Carnegie Library to help increase the number of youths in kitchens. Youth enrolled in the Cooking 101 series attended four sessions where they learned how to cook four meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks. Nutrition and Wellness Educator Mary Liz Wright and Youth Development Educator Jaylynn Schober taught the youth cooking basics, tips and tricks for healthier meals, and the influence cultures have on the food we eat, all while helping youth's confidence grow in their culinary abilities. Highlights included the avocado toast for breakfast and the tortilla hand pies. After the four sessions, the youth felt more confident in their ability to cook in the kitchen and create healthier meals for themselves and their families.





# GEM: Get Experience in Mindfulness Marshall Sophomore iGrow Workshop

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines mindfulness as a practice of maintaining a nonjudgmental state of heightened awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, or experiences in the present. Mindfulness is the basis of the GEM: Get Experience in Mindfulness program. Marshall High Sophomores learned about being mindful in the iGrow workshop. There was a 53% increase in students understanding what mindfulness is and how it relates to our health and wellness. Each session focused on incorporating a new way to be mindful and a calmdown technique to help them center themselves. Because of this, there was a 47% increase in students' ability to identify specific areas of their personal health and wellness that need improvement. Mental health and wellness are a growing topic today, especially in how it relates to our younger generations. Through the GEM program, sophomores continued the journey of self-discovery and self-regulation to help them be healthier, happier individuals.



After the Get Experience in Mindfulness Program, Marshall sophomores engaged with a panel of local supporters who have specialties in mindfulness and mental health.



During the communication and relationships session, students worked in groups of three to spell out listen with a series of challenges that pushed the youth to be creative.



Marshall eighth graders picked out entertainment costs at the Welcome to the Real World simulation.

#### Welcome to the Real World

Your grandparents sent you \$100 for your birthday. You have a flat tire. Pay \$25 to have the hole patched. Both are Chance cards in the Welcome to the Real World program. This Illinois Extension-created program delivers firsthand financial literacy experience in an impactful way. Casey, Marshall, and Martinsville eighth graders explored their future careers and how they fit into their current lifestyle. Students began by choosing a career and then incurred monthly expenses: housing, transportation, insurance, taxes, food, utilities, and more. This simulation of real life helps youth understand the importance of setting goals, planning for their future, and understanding finances that lead to making fiscally responsible decisions.

Of students who participated, 86% found the activity useful. One student said, "I will watch what I spend my money on more closely." Another said, "I have more respect for my parents who deal with it now." This eye-opening experience helps youth understand the role finances play in our future. Only 68% of students had enough money to meet their expenses. The largest surprise for the students was how much each expense was. They did not expect to pay such staggering prices for things like housing and cars. Amongst things learned, opening a savings account was the biggest skill learned with balancing income and expenses close behind. One volunteer said, "The kids realizing that their choices matter financially," when asked what went well with the program. Overall, this program demonstrates the need in our community to continue providing financial literacy education for future generations to help them succeed in being fiscally responsible adults.



#### 76%

of students said participating in this program will help them in the future.



#### Over 60%

of youth who participated learned how to open a savings account.



#### Work at Schwartz Park

The Master Gardens of Edgar County worked to remove invasive plants and overgrowth at Schwartz Park in Paris. Volunteers worked to remove honeysuckle, tree of heaven, and more while educating people about proper removal techniques, pruning tips, and more.





#### Master Gardeners receive state awards

Edgar County Master Gardener Trudy Wilson was selected as an outstanding master gardener at the 2023 Illinois State Master Gardener Conference. The Edgar County Master Gardeners received the Teamwork Award at the conference for their work and restructuring of their annual garden seminar: April in Paris.





# **April in Paris**

Edgar County Master Gardeners held their 21st annual gardening seminar: April in Paris. The seminar attracted 121 guests and featured gardening education, vendors, food, and fun. Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist attending the event received three hours of continuing education.



## Soil testing

Our offices collected 16 soil samples to be tested by KSI Laboratories for analysis. Master gardeners were contacted by those who submitted samples to interpret the lab's results.













































# Key Highlights



15,299 Local Website Users



509 **Educational Sessions** 



22,061 **Educational Direct Contacts** 



100 **Extension Volunteers** 



47 4-H Clubs



865 4-H Club Members



27

Master Gardener & Master Naturalist Volunteers

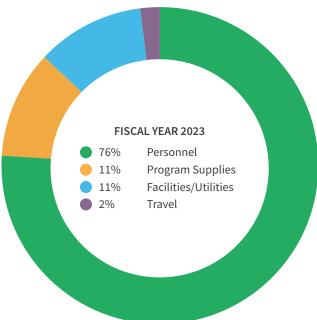


Hours donated by Master Gardeners and Master **Naturalists** 



\$191,829

Volunteer Valuation (MG, MN, and 4-H Volunteers)



Clark, Crawford, and Edgar County Extension is funded through a combination of federal dollars (23%), state dollars (30%), and local dollars (47%), which are returned to the community through educational programming.

# Today's Illinois Extension

Illinois Extension serves as a regional network with a presence in every Illinois county. We link communities, businesses, and the general population to the research and development and technical resources of the university and its partners. Illinois Extension is also a provider of 4-H youth development and leadership services, helping to provide the next generation of workers, leaders, and responsible citizens.

#### **STAFF**

Stacy Woodyard County Director

Tiffany Macke Educator, Community and Economic Development

Jaylynn Schober Educator, 4-H Youth Development

Mary Liz Wright Educator, Nutrition and Wellness Jennifer Bishop Program Coordinator, 4-H Youth Development

Tiffany Cervantes
Program Coordinator,
College and Career Readiness
and Leadership

April Knoblett Program Coordinator, 4-H Youth Development

Brittany Smith Program Coordinator, 4-H Youth Development Korina Allen Office Support

Christina Morgan Office Support

Rebecca Schiver Office Support

Summer Walker Office Support Abby Boerner Marketing Coordinator

Hope Dennis Community Worker, SNAP-Ed

#### **EXTENSION COUNCIL**

Dustin AtkinsErica HatfieldRandy Allen PetersonKeith CrouchLinda LaneDallas RichardsonDenise FreyMolly MorecraftMallory SimontonChandra GerberdingTaylor NetheryReuben Stence

Lendzy Stewart Capi Stone

#### **OFFICE INFORMATION**

#### **Clark County Extension**

15493 N. State Hwy 1 Marshall, IL 62441 (217) 826-5422 uie-cce@illinois.edu Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

#### **Crawford County Extension**

216 S. Cross St. Robinson, IL 62454 (618) 546-1549 uie-cce@illinois.edu Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

#### **Edgar County Extension**

210 W. Washington St. Paris, IL 61944 (217) 465-8585 uie-cce@illinois.edu Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

#### **ONLINE**



/uiextensioncce



search: What's Cooking with Mary Liz Wright



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.

#### 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.

The Illinois Nutrition Education Programs are funded by the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the US Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.