



# Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

## First and Second Quarter 2024 Impact Report Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties



## Extending Knowledge; Changing Lives

Illinois Extension offers practical education to help people, businesses and communities solve problems, develop skills and build a better future.







**Tri-State Forest Stewardship Conference brings forestry enthusiasts together** - Designed specifically for forestry landowners, professionals and consultants in the Midwest, this conference was held on Saturday, March 2 in Freeport and drew over 250 attendees from the tri-state area. Local staff played a large role in organizing and hosting the event, which was co-sponsored by University of Illinois Extension, Iowa State University Extension, and University of Wisconsin Extension. The day-long conference included keynote speakers as well as several sessions on forest management and conservation.



**Row crop producers meet for annual Agronomy Summit** - The speaker line-up for the Northwest Illinois Agronomy Summit held on Wednesday, January 31 in Freeport offered something for everyone from soil health to herbicide resistance. This event offered timely recommendations for row crop producers as well as unbiased, research-based information.



**Dairy producers gather for Illinois Dairy Summit** - On Wednesday, February 7, Dairy Farmers gathered in Freeport for the 2024 Illinois Dairy Summit. This year, the event focused on innovative ways to tackle the forecasted increase in production expenses and the drop in farm income—a concerning outlook.

Speakers from the event included University of Illinois Associate Professor of Animal Sciences Dr. Phil Cardoso and University of Illinois Dairy Extension Specialist Dr. Derek Nolan. Commercial Agriculture Educator Kathryn Seebruck and Program Coordinator Nikki Keltner were available to help with assistance in local agriculture programming.



**Biweekly podcast created to inform row crop producers** - Crop Sciences Educator Kathryn Seebruck has recorded 'Talking Crop,' a seasonal row crop production podcast created to provide farmers and agribusiness representatives with topical information and actionable management considerations. During the biweekly podcasts released from May through September, Seebruck discusses current trends and research updates with crop production guest experts.



For info about the Talking Crop podcast, visit [go.illinois.edu/TalkingCrop](http://go.illinois.edu/TalkingCrop)



**Driftless Region Beef Conference provides research-based information to beef producers** - This two-day event held on January 25-26 in Dubuque, Iowa for beef producers focused on production needs and timely topics. Participants had the opportunity to attend several workshops, visit sponsor displays and meet other beef producers from Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Local staff along with U of I Extension Beef Specialist Travis Meteer play an important role in helping plan this regional event.

**New series focuses on pasture management** - Natural Resources, Environment, & Energy Educator Jay Solomon created a new series, 'Pasture Management: Recovering from 2023' which featured three sessions focusing on recovering from the drought and short forage supply during the 2023 growing season. The sessions covered management practices to make the most of existing resources, consideration of overlooked resources and ways to build future forage resources.

**Livestock Production and Principles for Beginners series continues with popular topics** - First launched in 2023, this popular series came back for 4 webinars in 2024 featuring new topics to address the needs of those who are getting started, exploring the concept of, or even assists those who are brand new to livestock.

Sessions for 2024 included Equine Pasture Management, Fencing, Selling Meat in Illinois, and Sheep and Goat Internal Parasite Management.

“For those starting their livestock journey, we know that it can be challenging finding the right resources and getting the right answers. This webinar series presented by U of I Extension experts aim to cover essential and relevant topics that producers can put into place the upcoming season, gaining confidence in their livestock production.”

Grant McCarty  
Local Foods and Small Farms Educator



**Climate tools workshop offers ag professionals information about the changing climate** - On Thursday, February 29, the Climate Tools Workshop for Agriculture Professionals featured speakers from Illinois Extension, USDA Midwest Climate Hub, Midwest Regional Climate Center, Illinois State Climate Survey and the Illinois State Climatologist. After several presentations, participants then worked through several interactive scenarios under the guidance of our experts with lots of productive discussion.

**Certified Livestock Management (CLM) Trainings held throughout state** - Stanley “Jay” Solomon, Extension Natural Resources, Environment and Energy Educator, along with the CLM team, hosted 7 in-person workshops throughout the state in early 2024. Between the in-person events and online trainings, 260 people attended to become certified. This program, which has been in existence since 1996, is financially supported by the Illinois Department of Agriculture.

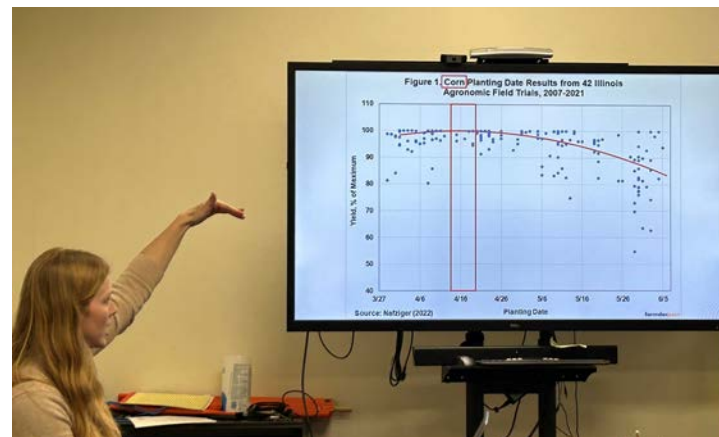
English and Spanish versions of the test were available again this year. New this year, the team had the brochure and handouts used in trainings were translated into Spanish.

Also new this year, an online calculator was introduced to determine nutrient needs of crops and to assess the value of manure. Previously these calculations were done by hand.

**Solomon earns award for dedication to forestry** - The Northwest Illinois Forestry Association (NIFA) presented the Forestry Pioneer Award to Stanley “Jay” Solomon, University of Illinois Extension Natural Resources, Environment and Energy Educator at the annual meeting in March. This award recognizes individuals who have been leaders in maintaining the health, growth, and diversity of forests in Northwest Illinois.



NIFA is a non-profit group created to spread awareness, gain interest, and educate about forestry to landowners and the public through meetings, field days and educational sessions. This includes the economic and environmental benefits of sustainable forest management. Situated in the northwest corner of Illinois, NIFA includes Jo Daviess, Stephenson, Carroll, Ogle, Whiteside and Lee counties.



**Farm Forward series brings row crop issues to light** - Crop Sciences Educator Kathryn Seebruck created a new three-part series, “Farm Forward: Turning Last Season’s Challenges Into Next Season’s Triumphs”. This series aimed to address the needs of row crop producers based on the 2023 growing season which was relatively dry, resulting in low disease pressure and high weed pressure.

“No two growing seasons are the same; however, lessons learned from previous seasons can be applied in those that follow. This series aims to facilitate discussion of last season’s challenges, uncertainties, and successes, and how those insights can be applied in the upcoming growing season.”

Kathryn Seebruck  
Crop Sciences Educator



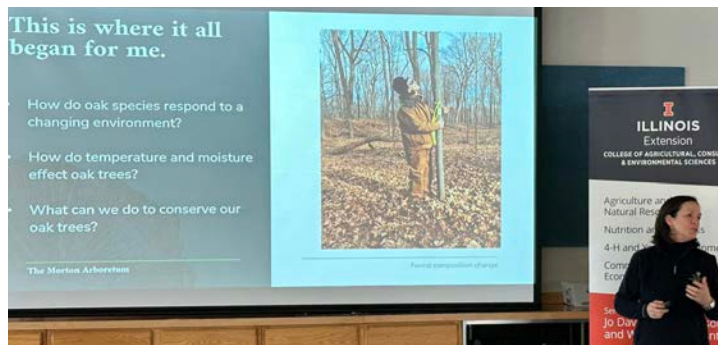


Organizing a large event like the Statelyne Fruits and Vegetable Conference takes a lot of time and energy. Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Grant McCarty co-chairs this event with Sarah Farley, the Local Foods and Small Farms Educator in Lake and McHenry counties. This year, five additional northern Illinois Extension Agriculture educators attended, presented and moderated including Kathryn Seebruck, Commercial Ag Educator.

**Statelyne continues to grow in popularity across the Midwest** - The 28th annual Northern Illinois Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference was held on February 19 in Rockford. Over 120 specialty growers and farmers from Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin attended and were able to learn from Extension experts from University of Illinois Extension, University of Minnesota Extension, Michigan State Extension and University of Wisconsin Extension. New for 2024 was the New Farmer track. Sessions focused on blueberries, apples, pumpkins, IPM, disease management, integrating livestock, farm finances, and herbicide resistance.



**Educators speak at Pesticide Safety Education program** - Commercial Ag Educator Kathryn Seebruck and Local Foods and Small Farms Educator Grant McCarty were two presenters at the private applicator training held in Rockford on March 5. These in-person courses are held throughout the state in partnership with Illinois Department of Agriculture to provide Illinois operators and applicators the opportunity to prepare for and take their licensing exams.



**Master Naturalist annual program, Winter Trails, proves to continue to be popular-** On January 27, the annual Winter Trails and Naturalist Tales event was held in rural Pecatonica. Master Naturalist and wildlife photographer Connie McIntosh presented 'Common Myths in Nature' and Tricia Bethke of Morton Arboretum addressed the stresses of oak trees due to climate events. After the presentations, attendees had the opportunity for hiking and bird watching at the Torstenson's Education Center outside of Pecatonica.



**Demonstrations with drones and cover crop robots were part of Spring Producer Workshop** - Extension partnered with the Winnebago County Soil & Water Conservation District for the annual Spring Producer Workshop held March 15. Extension speakers included Faculty Entomologist Nick Seiter, who presented on pest management and conservation practices, and Digital Ag Specialist Dennis Bowman, who presented on drone use in agriculture. Bowman also provided demonstrations using his drones and cover crop robot. Participants also enjoyed presentations on soil testing and alternative crops.





**Horticulture programming blooms with Winter and Spring events** - The ever-popular Horticulture programs including Joys of Gardening, Gardening for Food, Flowers & Fun as well as all of the spring weekly and monthly programming offered in Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties offered an array of educational programming from Master Gardeners, Master Naturalists, local Extension Educators and Program Coordinators as well as many others. Topics varied from landscape design to pollinators, native shrubs to brambles, herbs to pumpkins and so much more! Participants even enjoyed learning about seed starting, frogs and lilac tree trimming. While most of the programming was lecture style, some opportunities were available for hands-on experiences and these were a hit with the participants, especially events with the option to take a newly made item home.



**Master Gardeners stay active in communities** - With a mission to help others learn to grow, Master Gardeners in Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago Counties have been actively committed to their communities growing community gardens, running the Master Gardener Helpline, volunteering at local events, as well as sharing their love for all things related to gardening through presentations and workshops.



**Popularity of Flower Arranging class in Winnebago leads to more programming set for Fall** - Master Gardeners in Winnebago County led a fun flower arranging class the evening of March 21. Every participant took home a beautiful flower arrangement created with skills learned from the class! The class went over so well, there's programming set for the Fall 2024 in Jo Daviess for a similar one.



**Popularity of the Periodical Cicada Emergence leads to programming for all ages** - 2024 was a big year for periodical cicadas in Illinois. Broods XIII and XIX emerged throughout the state at the same time. The simultaneous emergence was the first time since 1803 and will not happen again until 2245. The popularity of the emergence led to programming about cicadas throughout the unit starting with one at the Nicholas Conservatory in early April where retired Extension Educator Russ Higgins shared his knowledge about the insect. Jay Solomon, Natural Resources, Environment and Energy Educator hosted a presentation on cicadas in Warren at the end of April.

Winnebago County 4-H and Youth Development Program Coordinator Becky Gocken held a program at the Juvenile Detention Center in Winnebago County on the life cycle of the cicada. Gocken put together some activities and videos for youth to learn more about the cicadas.





**Empowered Weight Loss program helps people understand weightloss** - Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold held a workshop in Stephenson and Jo Daviess in May titled 'Empowered to Make a Change: An Introduction to Weight Management.' During the program, Diane discussed reasons for weight gain, how weight is assessed, the benefits of losing and maintaining a healthy body weight, and helpful tips to promote weight loss. These programs were well attended and participants left feeling empowered to begin their wellness journey.

**Heart & Sole Walking Club makes debut** - Physical activity is a cornerstone for wellness, and what better way to do so, then to walk! Walking is a great exercise because it is low-impact. Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold held sessions in May and June in Stephenson County. The club was a great way for participants to connect with others as well as learn more about the benefits of physical activity as well as go for a walk.

**Yes, You Can! series continues to be popular** - Food preservation classes offered by Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold are a great way to stay informed with how to properly preserve food at home. Sessions were offered both virtually and in-person and included everything from freezing and dehydrating to water bath and pressure canning basics. This year, classes were also offered for making jams and jellies as well as focused sessions on green beans and carrots.

**Healthy Cooking at Home series created to help people save money by making their own nutritious meals** - This new series created by Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold helps people learn how to prepare meals at home by covering a variety of topics including air fryers, microwave cooking, herbs and eggs. Discussion on budget-friendly recipes, the health benefits of cooking at home as well as food safety tips and using small kitchen appliances will be covered in the classes.



**Food Safety courses available for food service employees and volunteers** - Over the course of the year, Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold held several classes in Jo Daviess, Stephenson and Winnebago counties offering food handling courses for both restaurant employees (Certified Food Protection Management) as well as volunteer group members (Serve It Safely). These classes ensure that food safety practices are consistent and meet local and state regulations, create a food safety culture, and more importantly, reduce the risk of food-borne illness.



**Program on Preparing for a Natural Disaster sparks interest** - With the increase in severe weather, being prepared for a disaster is vital to navigate the many challenges that can happen. On May 16, Nutrition and Wellness Educator Diane Reinhold and Youth Development Educator Kelly Lafferty provided great information to families as well as helped them create a family disaster action plan.







**Sharing knowledge with students through Earth Day celebrations** - On April 22 staff visited the Warren Elementary School during their Earth Day celebrations. Staff led three workshops for K-5th graders where students learned about watershed, pollinators and more.



**Sprouting young gardeners in Winnebago County** - Little Roots, a gardening program directed towards Cloverbud youth in Winnebago County, helped produce some green thumbs. In May, youth were given seven different seeds to plant at home. Throughout the summer, there were activities for youth to attend to learn more about gardening and the environment around them with a tour of a commercial greenhouse, a Wee Naturalist program with Educator Kelly Lafferty and a blueberry farm tour.

**Birding Basics shows youth how to stop, look and listen** - Youth in Jo Daviess County participated in a Birdie Basics,-Birding 101 workshop at the stunning Schurmeier Teaching Forest in April. Hillary Holt from Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and their volunteers spent the day teaching about the importance of birdwatching and how fun it can be! Youth learned about binoculars, birdwatching a n d identification, and ended the day with a nature hike and bird spotting.



**Ambassadors learn important life lessons while helping others** - On March 16, Stephenson County's 4-H Ambassadors went shopping to fill 30 backpacks for 30 families. The youth saw a need in their community for food security for kids over spring break, so they planned, wrote a shopping list, shopped and assembled the backpacks that would go to households in need.

**Bass Fishing Club catches some big fun** - One of Winnebago's most popular programs is the Bass Fishing club held in June with Program Coordinator Becky Gocken. This year, Educator Jay Solomon demonstrated the water table as part of the educational portion of this four-day program. Of course, the highlight was the last few days of fishing and competing for catching the biggest largemouth bass at Torstenson Youth Conservation Education Center in Pecatonica!



**Youth Leadership Conference focuses on resiliency** - The Youth Leadership Conference was held on June 22 in Rockford. Speakers at the event shared personal stories of resiliency with youth ages 11-18 years old. Topics highlighted included strategies to overcome obstacles and challenges the youth might be facing as well as panel discussions, skill-building activities, and networking. The conference is sponsored through a memorial honoring Tom Schingoethe who served a 40-year career as the U of I Extension Winnebago County office's county director while becoming the Associate Director of the Northwest Region.

“Empowering young leaders to navigate adversity with resilience, is not just about overcoming challenges, it is also about turning obstacles into opportunities and transforming setbacks into stepping stones toward success.”

Gina Adams  
4-H Youth Development, Rockford





**SNAP-Ed program helps low-income families lead healthier lives** - The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP-Ed), in Stephenson and Winnebago Counties have been busier than ever with helping low-income people and families. Community Outreach Workers lead classes and provide information on basic nutrition, physical activity, and food access for individuals and families in need.



Community Outreach Worker Marcia McMahon holds a cooking demonstration at the Winnebago County Housing Authority in January.



Barb Curry, Stephenson County SNAP-Ed Community Worker, baked some Fruit and Nut Granola Bar Clusters to hand out to patrons at the New Jerusalem Food Pantry in Freeport. This simple recipe from the Eat. Move. Save. program includes pantry staples and is healthy and delicious!

## University of Illinois Extension office locations

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### Winnebago County

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### SNAP-Ed Rockford Office

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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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