

Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Impact.

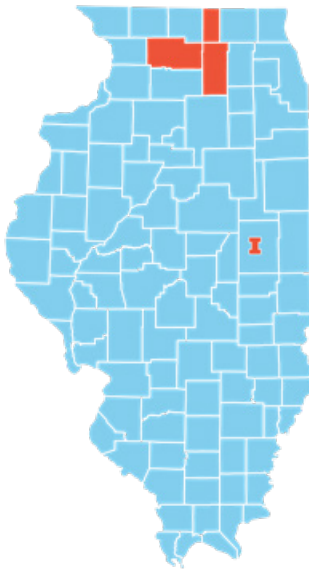


Serving Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle Counties
Illinois Extension Impact Report 2024





Heather Coyle
County Director



Strategic Plans

The University of Illinois strategic plan is named Boldly Illinois 2030. “Boldly Illinois is a collective opportunity to think differently, take risks, be courageous enough to fail and transcend business as usual. Collective, because we value collaboration to solve problems and promote understanding.”

Boldly Illinois 2030 identifies Illinois Extension as a key plan resource, and in 2024 Extension completed a strategic planning process to better align local needs with university resources.

MISSION:
University of Illinois Extension develops educational programs, extends knowledge, and builds partnerships to support people, communities, and their environments as part of the state’s land grant institution.

VALUES:
Collaboration, Credibility, Inclusivity, and Learning

Peruse these pages and enjoy examples of University of Illinois Extension at work, pursuing its mission, living its values, and serving the needs of the community. Consider the families, volunteers, agencies, program and funding partners who joined with Extension to solve problems and promote understanding. You and Extension, the perfect team.

Heather Coyle
County Director

Boldly Illinois 2030: boldly.illinois.edu/align-and-plan/#Collaboration

2024 Extension Strategic Plan: go.illinois.edu/StrategicPlanning

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 eight strategic priorities:



Community



Health



Economy



Partnerships



Environment



Technology and Discovery



Food and Agriculture



Workforce Excellence

2024 Engagement

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

<p>730 Communities Served</p>	<p>805K+ Program Attendees</p>	<p>9.7M+ Webpage Views</p>	<p>22.4M+ Social Media Impressions</p>	<p>2.5M+ YouTube Impressions</p>
<p>547 Educational Sessions/Week (28K+ Annually)</p>	<p>90 Online Courses Accessed by 12K+ People</p>	<p>12,484 Local Government Education Webinar Reach</p>	<p>1,840 4-H Clubs</p> <p>20,339 Members</p>	<p>67,917 Fair Exhibits</p> <p>261,012 4-H Experiences</p>

Partnerships

Resource Generation

<p>5,563 Program Volunteers</p>	<p>266 Community Gardens</p>	<p>2,922 School and Community Partners</p>	<p>\$15,735,213 Value of Volunteer Contributions</p>	<p>\$514,316 Value of Donated Produce Grown or Facilitated</p>	<p>\$4.7M+ External Funds Secured for SNAP-Ed Partners</p>
--	---	---	---	---	---



Protecting community assets

Astronauts look for signs of water on other planets because it is a foundational element for life. Midwesterners often take water quality for granted and are less likely to be concerned about conserving water than their western neighbors, yet regional aquifer levels are diminishing, and personal behaviors are having negative impacts on water quality in our communities.

Recognizing wise water stewardship requires leadership. Extension Natural Resources, Environment, and Energy Educator Peggy Anesi and Extension Program Coordinator Judy Hodge worked with a small group of local community leaders to pilot a four-session, once-per-month Watershed Stewardship for Leaders program. To develop the program, Anesi adopted the four most crucial topics from the Illinois Indiana Master



Watershed Steward program: hydrology, water quantity, water quality, and best management practices, as all relate to stormwater. When completed, the committee commented on how well the program flowed, the number of attendees each month, averaging 32, the interest in continuing education, and the tangible results shared by participants. The cost of the program, including educational material and lunches, was completely covered by grants and sponsorships.

The Watershed Stewardship for Leaders program goal was to assist local leaders by direct contact with experts in the field of stormwater, giving them knowledge, support, and resources they can utilize when faced with making critical watershed infrastructure decisions for their county, cities, and towns.

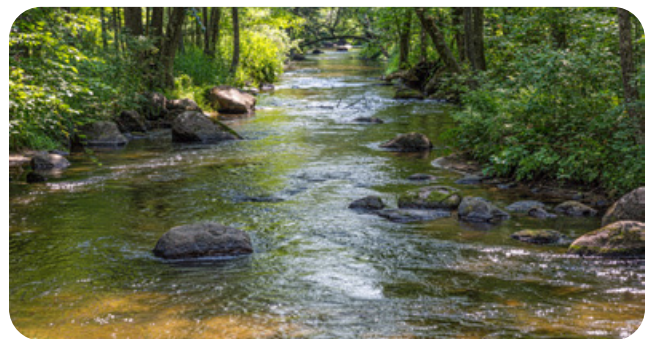
Ripples from this program series are still observable. Extension also offered the Illinois-Indiana program, a program designed for the general public. Extension units across the state are considering offering the locally developed leadership program to their counties as well. The most important outcome was the creation of a part-time watershed specialist position for Boone County. The county administrator attended the series and recognized the critical need to have an expert in place to help with watershed issues in their communities.

Expanding community capacity

When it comes to education and sustainability, DeKalb Soil and Water Conservation District and Extension share similar educational objectives. By partnering, local resources are frugally managed and jointly enhanced. Executive Director Dean Johnson and Resource Conservationist Jeff Woodyatt partnered with Extension on a variety of programs this year, including Master Watershed, Master Naturalist, and the Paddle and Learn summer teacher workshop.

Collaboration with partners like University of Illinois Extension is essential as it provides the opportunity to use the knowledge and professional talents of each organization's staff to effectively provide quality education to the targeted audience.

Dean Johnson, executive director





Increasing community resources

Illinois Extension collaborates to provide local education through federal and state grants. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides community-based nutrition education for income-eligible individuals and families. In Illinois, this program is known as Eat. Move. Save. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program works with communities and local partners to prevent obesity and reduce the risk of chronic disease through educational programs and by increasing awareness of community resources. Local programs are delivered in schools, food pantries, community gardens, farmers markets, low-income housing, and other community sites.



Learn more about Eat. Move. Save.
eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu



New school opportunities

Focusing on the idea that educational success for a student involves the family, the school, and the community, Illinois Extension partnered with the Belvidere South Middle School, District 100, to offer a program called Juntos. This five-week series presented by 4-H Youth Development Educator Johnna Jennings, along with support from Belvidere School staff Karen Ortiz-Rendon, Jasmine Rosa, Linda Colson, as well as 4-H staff Katie Williamson, and Melissa Irwin, focused on helping Hispanic/Latino eighth grade students and their families as they prepare for high school. The weekly topics included making education a family goal, effective communication at home, transitioning from middle school to high school, transitioning from high school to higher education, and graduation.

On average, 42 individuals attended the weekly Juntos workshops, and 12 families graduated. All the families attending indicated that the workshops benefited them and will be most helpful as their child enters high school and beyond.



Maintaining a reputation of excellence

Illinois Extension has long been recognized as a leader in youth development. Of the 235 4-H volunteers who served in Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle counties, three were inducted into the 4-H Hall of Fame and recognized at the Illinois State Fair. Extension Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists are also well known for the difference they make in communities. Extension depends on and appreciates its 60 Master Gardener volunteers and 32 Master Naturalist volunteers who gave over 5,500 hours to Extension programming and events. Although only a few awards are given each year, every one of Extension's volunteers deserves recognition.



Sharing resources

Illinois Extension's mission is to develop educational programs and extend knowledge to support Illinois residents. For Illinois Extension's Community and Economic Development team, one way to serve this mission is to help communities build capacity for innovative and informed decision-making to enhance quality of life.

As one means to accomplish this, the team has spent several years developing and expanding its Local Government Education webinar series. These webinars are designed as a resource for local government officials and community leaders. The Local Government Education webinars are offered throughout the year, featuring programs about economic development strategies, budgeting and planning, ethics, regulations and compliance, broadband, community initiatives, and other timely topics. From our region alone, at least 94 local leaders registered for the programming.



Learn more about Local Government Education
extension.illinois.edu/lge



Dedicated volunteers help the community

The DeKalb County Master Gardener volunteers comprise many dedicated individuals, some of whom have been volunteering together for many years. Extension Program Coordinator Connie Handel asked the Master Gardener volunteers why they volunteered. Responses included giving back to the community, helping and teaching others, making a positive difference in others' lives, and sharing their knowledge, experience, and passion for gardening and nature.

The DeKalb County Master Gardener program has two volunteers who have been with the program for more than 20 years. Three people have been volunteering between 16 and 18 years. And 23 volunteers have been volunteering with the program for between one and ten years.

Why do Illinois Extension volunteers keep coming back? For many, it is the friendships they have formed over the years. Learning opportunities and resources afforded to Extension volunteers, opportunities to interface with other gardeners and the community, and the belief that the knowledge they are passing on is vital to sustaining the planet and its people.



60
Master Gardener
Volunteers



3,787
Total Master
Gardener Hours



\$127,859
Value of volunteer labor



2
Volunteer full time employee equivalent



150
Information services provided by Master
Gardeners



Learn more about the Master Gardener program
extension.illinois.edu/bdo/master-gardeners



New educator has a passion for public health

Illinois Extension welcomed a new SNAP-Ed Educator, Michael Swedberg, in the fall. Swedberg comes to Extension with years of experience in public health. He worked as a food safety trainer in the private sector, an outpatient dietitian for Denver Health & Hospital Authority, and a WIC dietitian at the Winnebago County Health Department.

Illinois Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program partners with agencies, schools, and community organizations to provide SNAP-eligible families and individuals with obesity prevention and chronic disease reduction programming. SNAP-Ed programming is a vital community resource.

"I look forward to being able to maintain and cultivate new community partnerships across Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle counties on behalf of Extension. My hope is that we can continue to improve health outcomes. A significant component of health begins with access to food, followed by the empowerment to make wiser choices when possible. As we know, nutrition is a key element of overall health for the individual, but this can also have positive ripple effects on the entire community. Small changes can make big differences," stated Swedberg. He earned his Bachelor of Science from Northern Illinois University and Master of Science from Kansas State University.

Swedberg is happy to channel his passion for public health in his home community. He is based in the DeKalb County Office and can be reached at mcswed@illinois.edu.





Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers recognized for making a difference

The Boone County Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists continue to use their knowledge and skills to reach, teach, and make a difference in the community. Each year, the group works together to come up with programming that would make an impact on those they are connecting with. Their programming activities include a Speaker's Bureau, community gardens, native gardens, and working the Help Desk, where they answer horticulture questions from the community.

Why do Extension's volunteers do what they do and return every year? Master Gardener Pat Castro shared, "I volunteer because I enjoy working with people in the community. I like helping them learn new things they can use and pass on to others. Also, when leading a program, I almost always learn something I didn't know from the program participants. I like the exchange of ideas between people. I like the Master Gardener Program and working with the other Master Gardeners in Boone County, collaborating on new ideas and programs for the community. Also, the Extension staff I have worked with have all been excellent." Pat received the State Outstanding Master Gardener Award this year because of her dedication to sharing her knowledge with the community through the Speaker's Bureau programs and her leadership with the Buchanan Street Community Garden in partnership with the Juntos 4-H Club.

Master Gardener and Master Naturalist Barb Wych shared, "Volunteering gives me something important to do. I have the time now to help others and continue to learn myself. It gives me mental stimulation. I volunteer with great people, and I appreciate the continuing education that I receive each year as



Boone County Master Gardener Pat Castro received the State Outstanding Master Gardener Award.

it provides credentials." Barb has been a Master Gardener for over 20 years and volunteers in various projects. She was on the team of six Master Gardeners who won the Teamwork Award for providing 25 Speaker's Bureau programs to the community. As a Master Naturalist, Barb volunteers with the Boone County Conservation District, assisting with their volunteer stewardship days.

Master Gardener Greg Hills spends much of his volunteer time covering the Help Desk. He likes to assist residents struggling with gardening issues in their yards. Greg shared, "I enjoy gardening and like sharing what knowledge I have with other people. I also like enhancing my knowledge and skills by learning from fellow volunteers. I return yearly because I enjoy spending time with the volunteers and coordinator. I also appreciate the amount of knowledge shared by the University to the Extension."

It certainly takes a team to coordinate, lead, and perform the duties specific to each project. This group continually develops its program base and inspires each other and the staff working with them. One of the perks of these volunteer programs is that you can tailor your involvement around your lifestyle. Volunteers can participate in the projects that interest them and connect them with the community in a way that works for them.



Volunteers inducted into the Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame

Illinois 4-H honors and celebrates extraordinary 4-H alums, volunteers, and former 4-H staff. Illinois 4-H volunteers empower and prepare youth for success as the program relies on over 6,000 volunteers statewide to fill key leadership and mentoring roles. Those inducted into the 4-H Hall of Fame have a track record of exemplary service to 4-H or outstanding career and community achievement and were nominated by county University of Illinois Extension staff. Each inductee receives a commemorative Hall of Fame medallion at the Illinois State Fair 4-H Alumni and Volunteer Celebration events. This year, 70 individuals were inducted into the Illinois 4-H Hall of Fame, including three from Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle counties.

Boone County 4-H wouldn't be the same without Cheryl Sturges' 40 years of dedication. She ignites passions and youth through project support and fosters leadership by guiding officers and implementing impactful community service activities. Beyond 4-H, Cheryl serves her community, having served in education, church leadership, and historic preservation. "I love watching 4-H members grow and develop skills through the 4-H program and seeing how those skills help them become wonderful citizens who give back through 4-H or other community organizations," said Cheryl.

DeKalb County is lucky to have inductee Dale Swanson. As Nicole Groezinger, DeKalb County 4-H Program Coordinator, said, "Eleven years ago, Dale was instrumental in founding the DeKalb County Shooting Sports Air Rifle Club. He grew it from under ten 4-H members to as many as thirty-six under his leadership. After completing instructor training for air rifles,



Dale Swanson founded the DeKalb County 4-H Shooting Sports Air Rifle Club 11 years ago.



Ogle County 4-H recognized Annette Martin for her leadership commitment.

shotguns, and pistols, the team has succeeded significantly, including placing first in the State in 2023 and competing nationally. Dale's dedication ensures the smooth operation of the club, making him a vital role model who genuinely cares about the growth and development of youth in his community."

Ogle County 4-H recognized Annette Martin. "Annette's commitment to Ogle County 4-H is exceptional! She has taken on the leadership role of the Carefree 4-H Club while volunteering extensively. She teaches a beef session at the Ag Awareness Day and encourages kids to participate in local and state fair carcass shows. Her family is a familiar presence at the beef barn during the 4-H fair and graciously hosts 4-H Federation and club campfires at her home. Annette is always willing to lend a helping hand at events. She recently joined the goat committee and assisted with 4-H shows," said Ogle County 4-H Program Coordinator Jodi Baumgartner. When Annette was asked why she volunteers, she said, "4-H is one of the few organizations where the whole family can participate. Having seven kids with a 13-year difference in ages, 4-H was a way that we could all be involved in the same activities. I volunteer because 4-H is a way to promote family togetherness and cooperation."



235
4-H adult volunteers



22,560
4-H adult club volunteer hours



\$761,626
Value of volunteer labor



Volunteers teach youth at Ag Awareness Days

Ag Awareness Days took place for the 22nd consecutive year. It is intended that participants will think twice the next time they fry an egg, pass a cornfield-turned-subdivision, put on their leather boots, wrap up in a wool blanket, drink a glass of milk, or eat a bowl of cereal. The Midwest has long been heralded as a top agricultural production site. Logically, tomorrow's leaders understand how they fit into it.

Students engage in thirty-minute workshops led by a variety of agricultural professionals. Students have opportunities to mingle with livestock, explore ag careers, chat with a traveling vet, discuss basic biotechnology concepts, learn about other crops, navigate waypoints, and discuss how much soil it takes to grow crops.

Many students reported that they most enjoyed hearing firsthand the daily events of a livestock vet, harvesting honey, and using a GPS unit to find hidden coordinates in a scavenger hunt. Students also had fun collecting cool fact cards at each workshop station.

"This annual event wouldn't be possible without volunteer presenters. Jeff Ludwig, a local beekeeper, has presented at the event for 22 years. Ludwig sees students as the decision-makers of tomorrow. He wants them to understand their food doesn't just come from the grocery store but that a lot of sweat and hard work goes into food production. He teaches students that the honeybee is on the ground floor of agriculture. Honeybees provide honey and pollination to have food such as fruits and vegetables. They are also integral in pollinating the hay the farm animals eat and the cotton that makes fiber for clothes," said Extension Program Coordinator Melinda Colbert.

This annual event wouldn't be possible without volunteer presenters.
Melinda Colbert, program coordinator



Volunteer presenter Jeff Ludwig showed students how he retrieves honey from his bee hives.

Growing local food

It was an inaugural year for Flagg-Rochelle Public Library's "Seed Library," collaborating with Ogle County Master Gardener volunteers. The seed library, housed in a repurposed card catalog, provides herbs, flowers, native plants, and vegetable seeds to the public free of charge.

The January kick-off event coincided with "National Seed Swap Day," celebrated on the last Saturday of January each year. Master Gardeners offered educational workshops at the library and distributed seed packets at Cypress House Outdoor Farmer's Market and the Ogle County Fair throughout the year.



7
Active food donation gardens



3,824
Pounds of produce donated



\$6,768
Value of produce donated

Food Donation Community Garden	Weight in Pounds
Buchanan Street	231
Engh Farm	1,780
NASR	169
Rick Johns Memorial	1,644



Volunteering at the only nature center in DeKalb County

Residents of northern DeKalb County are lucky to live near the beautiful Russell Woods Forest Preserve in Genoa, which is also home to DeKalb County's only nature center, the Natural Resource Education Center. In 1993, University of Illinois Extension, DeKalb County Forest Preserve, and the DeKalb County Soil and Water Conservation District created the Natural Resource Education Consortium to support natural resource education in DeKalb County.

Illinois Extension Program Coordinator Marian Termini greets visitors Monday through Friday and assists in educating elementary students about the natural resources around them. She also cares for the several reptile and amphibian species housed there, one of which is a 75-pound African sulcata tortoise named T.J.

While Termini is the steady presence at the NREC on weekdays, weekend visitors are greeted by Master Naturalist volunteers who have committed to one Saturday per month, year-round.

"I enjoy meeting the surprised visitors who are just finding the center and never knew of its existence," said Master Naturalist Jim Paulin, who, with his Master Naturalist wife, Deb, dedicates the first Saturday of every month to being at the center. "I like the kids who visit because they always have questions, and even if I don't know the answer, we can usually figure out how to find it," added Paulin.

Master Naturalist Patti Towers has similar sentiments about volunteering. "For me, it has always been seeing the joy and enthusiasm of the visitors. They love it at Russell Woods." Master Naturalist volunteer Janet Giesen adds, "Being involved with activities and events at Russell Woods Nature Center keeps me tied to the natural world and allows me to continue to gain new experiences and skills."

Volunteers also assist with two public, day-long events: WinterFest in January and NatureFest in April. "Our volunteers are crucial to the success of these events," said Termini. "We couldn't reach so many people with natural resource education in one day without their involvement."

I love volunteering with programs that support families and connect them with nature.

Sarah Tobias, Master Naturalist



Learn more about the Master Naturalist program extension.illinois.edu/bdo/master-naturalists



Helpful hands-on activity with Master Naturalists Jim and Deb Paulin.

"I love volunteering with programs that support families and connect them with nature," said Master Naturalist Sarah Tobias. "I always mark Winterfest and Naturefest on my calendar. Watching and supporting families as they explore, create, and learn through each day's various programs and activities is highly rewarding."



32

Master Naturalist Volunteers



2,038

Total Master Naturalist Hours



\$68,794

Value of volunteer labor



1

Volunteer full time employee equivalent



203

Educational Sessions | Environment



3,434

Participants



Developing community leaders

“Thriving Youth” and “Community Involvement and Leadership” are two Extension priorities. In the summer, a multi-disciplinary Extension team partnered with DeKalb County government officials, school counselors, and even a frozen custard shop to host “Hometown Leaders,” a program piloted by Extension the previous summer in Boone County.

The three-part program is designed to introduce high-school youth to county government services and career opportunities. The Extension team’s recruiting differed somewhat from the 2023 program, as the team did not confine its recruitment to 4-H members but rather contacted high-school advisors across DeKalb County for recommendations on high school juniors and seniors who might express interest and commit.

The program began in April with a classroom session about the history and structure of county government, led by Community Economic Development Extension Educator Mike Delany in cooperation with Deputy County Administrator Derek Hiland and County Board Chair Ellingsworth Webb, who also shared their career path experiences.

In May, the students visited a DeKalb County Board meeting. As it turned out, the group got even more than they could have hoped for, as several matters were raised and debated at the meeting that were very current and somewhat contentious issues in local news coverage. These issues included the arrival in the county of the first tribal reservation in Illinois, along with the always difficult deliberations surrounding the operation and potential sale of the county’s nursing home. Thanks to the quick thinking of one county board member early in the meeting, the committee members created and passed a special motion to extend, specifically and solely for the Hometown Leaders student attendees, the normally limited time for audience comments during the meeting.

In June, the group spent a full day visiting DeKalb County government sites. This session offered the students opportunities to view a broad array of county offices and activities, ranging from active courtrooms in the DeKalb County Courthouse to live 911 calls in the DeKalb County Sheriff’s Communication Center. At each location, a host explained the functions of the department and potential career paths.

The morning and afternoon visits were separated by a working lunch, where students assumed the role of a county official in a mock “county committee meeting.” Members of county administration represented the public, presenting issues for resolution. The students had the opportunity to discuss topics recently debated by the county board with administrators and board members.

At the conclusion of the day, participants were treated to custard donated by a local Culver’s restaurant. When asked for a show of hands in response to the question of how many felt they had learned something new over the course of the day, all participants responded in the affirmative. The county administrators and county board members, for their part, concluded the day by expressing their own gratitude to the Extension team for this opportunity to interact with these young folks and present to them a “real life” look at the variety of careers as a public servant in county government in DeKalb County.



4-H members between the ages of 15 and 20 served as 4-H camp counselors this past summer.

Teen leaders make 4-H camp possible

Making the best better in 4-H doesn’t happen overnight, especially when discussing 4-H camp. In northern Illinois, 4-H provides a week of summer camp in a nine-county area. This summer, 155 campers between the ages of 8 and 14 participated. None of this would have been possible without the assistance of outstanding 4-H teen leaders who serve as 4-H camp counselors. Twenty-seven 4-H members between the ages of 15 to 20 served as 4-H camp counselors. 4-H Extension staff put a great deal of responsibility on these 4-H camp counselors and, as a result, have high expectations in their attendance at monthly training meetings. Counselors were asked to attend seven days and 36.5 hours of training. During these trainings, staff covered various topics designed to help the counselors in their roles as they care, collaborate, plan, and implement a safe, fun, and educational week at 4-H Camp. Many camp counselors reapply yearly to serve in this role, but new counselors also join the team. “The energy and enthusiasm our camp counselors bring to this program make it a success,” said Johnna Jennings, 4-H youth development educator. “How well our camp counselors do their jobs will determine if a camper chooses to return to camp for another year and perhaps if they would ever want to be a 4-H camp counselor. We truly cannot do this program without their dedication and leadership.”





Training the heart of the 4-H program

Volunteers are crucial to programming efforts at Illinois Extension. Without volunteers, youth wouldn't have 4-H clubs to join, nor would Illinois Extension have superintendents to help manage a variety of segments that make up the 4-H shows and fairs.

New for 2025, Illinois Extension requires all 4-H volunteers to participate in three hours of training. These training opportunities educate leaders on various topics related to their interests, university guidelines, and program support. 4-H Youth Development Educator Johnna Jennings organized the "Northern Illinois Regional 4-H Volunteer and Teen Leader Conference – Focus on the Future." This free all-day event held in DeKalb County featured 19 workshops by northern Illinois 4-H staff, five State 4-H specialists, and opening remarks from State 4-H Acting Program Leader Kevin Carey. The day was a success, with 79 volunteers and teens participating.

Volunteers expressed their thoughts about the event, "This was so well organized and flawless. Presenters were knowledgeable, kind, and receptive to ideas. It was encouraging and fun. While it took a lot of schedule finagling to be able to come, it was worth it. Thank you." and "This was great. Lots of time to connect with other leaders to learn about what other clubs do."

Also, "Successful day. I enjoyed every class and meeting new people. The information I received will be put to use." Another volunteer stated, "I feel everyone involved put a lot of hard work and enthusiasm into preparing for the day and should be given a bonus as I know how much time, effort, and energy went into making the day happen and to award with a successful turnout." It was noted that the 4-H leadership demonstrated a passion for 4-H and an openness to new ideas, ready to embrace the future, and helped 4-H to continue to be one of the best, if not the best, youth organizations for preparing youth for their future lives.



4-H PLEDGE: I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world.

4-H



3,619
Fair Exhibits



704
Exhibitors



23,933
Experiences



980
Members

Number of 4-H Clubs



37
Boone



25
DeKalb



17
Ogle



79
Total Clubs



Rose Lockert of Kingdom Seekers 4-H Club at the Boone County 4-H General Projects Show.



Volunteer Lynn Reilley judged projects prepared by B.J. Berkhimer and David Roberts of the Opportunity House Helpers 4-H Club.



A special side of 4-H

The adult special needs 4-H program was developed through partnerships between Illinois Extension, Opportunity House in DeKalb County, Village of Progress in Ogle County, and Belvidere Park District Northland Association for Special Recreation, or NASR, in Boone County.

The partnerships served over 50 developmentally delayed adults in four separate 4-H clubs. 4-H leaders and Extension staff facilitate meetings, which provide time for individuals to work on projects and develop skills.

Members worked in small groups to prepare for the Special Projects Show. They reviewed the steps taken to complete each project and practiced speaking to adults to explain the process used.

Opportunity House held its Special Projects Show at the DeKalb Center for Agriculture. Judging took place in the morning, with an open house and a dinner sponsored by the Sycamore Kiwanis Club in the evening. NASR held two days of judging at the Boone County Extension Office, with an evening open house, including snacks made by the 4-H members. Village of Progress judging took place at the Ogle County Extension Office, followed by an open house. Members from each county prepared and presented a small program to thank guests for their support.

Community members volunteered to be judges and were selected based on experience working with the special needs population. The judging process included interaction between 4-H members and judges, allowing members to talk about their projects and explain what they gained from being involved in 4-H. Members expressed a love for 4-H and have formed positive bonds with peers in their club.

Poverty is not a game

According to the 2022 U.S. Census Bureau, over 37.9 million United States residents live at or below the poverty line, including almost 7% of the families in Boone County. Even if a family does not fall below the poverty line, which as of 2024 is about \$31,000 for a four-person household, daily life for any family of limited means can be stressful.

To help residents of Illinois develop better insight into the impact of the stresses of poverty on the emotions and behavior of their fellow residents, University of Illinois Extension facilitates Missouri Community Action Network's Community Action Poverty Simulation, or CAPS, for groups around the state. At the request of the Boone County Hunger Coalition and Rock Valley College, Illinois Extension Community Economic Development Educator and trained CAPS Facilitator Mike Delany and Illinois Extension Family Consumer Science Educator Diane Reinhold brought this simulation to a group consisting primarily of members of the Rock Valley community in the two counties.

During the simulation, 60 community members took on fictional personas as members of households with incomes close to the poverty level. In four 15-minute "weeks," they lived a month of challenges faced by those who have to decide daily between paying their rent, buying their prescriptions, or putting food on their children's plates. In the subsequent debriefing session, the participants and the 20 volunteers who had role-played the service providers reflected on and shared their reactions to the experience.

The consensus among participants and volunteers alike was that the experience was "eye-opening." One participant, the executive director of an area non-profit that deals with this population daily, had a light bulb moment as she experienced the simulated chaos that can envelop someone living in poverty on any given day because of factors beyond their control. A volunteer and an administrator at a family service agency noted, "The CAPS poverty simulation was more impactful than I ever expected. The stress the participants experienced in the four 15-minute 'weeks' was palpable — and we knew there was an end in sight."

While Extension's facilitation team knows that these simulations won't directly end poverty, they do intend that, by better sensitizing community members to the situation of the impoverished, the simulation will move community leaders to direct more attention and resources to their plight.



Learn more about poverty simulation
go.illinois.edu/PovertySimulations





Extension Advisory Council Members

Thank you to the volunteers who serve on our Extension Advisory Council. The Boone, DeKalb, and Ogle Counties Advisory Council is a vital advocacy group separated by four subcommittees: 4-H and Youth, Community and Economic Development, Health and Local Foods, and Natural Resources, Energy, and Environment. Each subcommittee supports University of Illinois Extension’s services as the County Cooperative Extension law requires. The council helps meet the challenges of maintaining close relationships and community awareness in each county by cooperatively working with Illinois Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, and evaluating Extension programs, which are designed to meet the needs, interests, and resources of the local communities being served.

4-H AND YOUTH

Carson Conderman Ogle County*	Trent Heller Ogle County*	Jennifer Mora Boone County
Chelsea Eden Ogle County	Lillian Hetland DeKalb County*	Heather Nelson Boone County
Noe Escamilla DeKalb County	Ellie Hildebrandt Boone County*	Allen Ryan Boone County*
Ellie Davis DeKalb County*	Tina Holtz DeKalb County	Jane Zeien Boone County
Dori DeLaCruz DeKalb County*	Araceli Lopez King DeKalb County	* Denotes a youth member.

COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Gina Caronna DeKalb County	Sherrie Taylor Ogle County	Heather Wick Boone County
Luis Gonzalez Boone County	Liz Vos Ogle County	

NATURAL RESOURCES, ENVIRONMENT, AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

Jodi Gudewicz DeKalb County	Jeff Woodyatt DeKalb County	Anita Zurbrugg DeKalb County
Kayse Rushford Ogle County	Barb Wych Boone County	

HEALTH AND LOCAL FOODS COMMITTEE

Candace Fore Ogle County	Sarah Hackbarth Ogle County	Rylie Loucks-Kues DeKalb County	Mark Schuth Boone County
-----------------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------------	-----------------------------

Local Extension Program Locations

Locations	Enrolled	Attended
Community and recreation centers	500	1,266
Community organizations	1,007	1,137
Day care centers	280	532
Emergency shelters / temporary housing sites	79	79
Extension offices	2,183	2,833
Faith-based centers / places of worship	219	287
Family resource centers	18	18
Gardens	179	179
Group living arrangements	71	71
Healthcare clinics and hospitals	1	2
Individual homes or public housing sites	18	48
Libraries	267	389
Parks and spaces	1,806	2,311
Public housing sites	17	17
Schools (colleges and universities)	160	160
Schools (K-12)	18,529	26,051
State / county fairgrounds	3,709	3,709

Grand Total

29,043
Enrolled

39,089
Attended

STAFF SERVING BOONE, DEKALB & OGLE COUNTIES

Heather Coyle
County Director

Michael Swedberg
SNAP-Ed Educator

Brianne Gugerty
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Kelli Morrow
Office Support Associate

Peggy Anesi
Natural Resources,
Environment, and Energy
Educator

Jodi Baumgartner
4-H Program Coordinator

Connie Handel
Program Coordinator

Jennifer Robinson
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Mike Delany
Community and Economic
Development Educator

Sandy Challgren
Office Support Assistant

Anna Henson
Office Support Assistant

Jan Sagiler
Program Coordinator

Johnna Jennings
4-H Youth Development
Educator

Melinda Colbert
Ag in the Classroom Program
Coordinator

Judy Hodge
Program Coordinator

Teresa Schwarz
Office Support Specialist

Abigail Nelson
4-H Youth Development
Educator

Kathy Dombek
4-H Program Coordinator

Tally Lalor
4-H Program Coordinator

Marian Termini
Ag and Natural Resources
Program Coordinator

Nicole Groezinger
4-H Program Coordinator

Amy Miller
Office Support Specialist

Katie Williamson
4-H Program Coordinator

Stevie Momaly
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

OFFICE INFORMATION

Boone County Extension

205 Cadillac Court, Suite 3
Belvidere, IL 61008-1733
(815) 544-3710

Email: uie-bdo@illinois.edu

Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

DeKalb County Extension

1350 West Prairie Drive
Sycamore, IL 60178-3166
(815) 758-8194

Email: uie-bdo@illinois.edu

Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

Ogle County Extension

421 West Pines Road, Suite 10
Oregon, IL 61061-9003
(815) 732-2191

Email: uie-bdo@illinois.edu

Mon - Fri, 8 am - 4:30 pm

Natural Resource Education Center

Russell Woods Forest Preserve
11750 State Route 72

Genoa, IL 60135

(815) 784-2000

Hours by appointment

ONLINE



extension.illinois.edu/bdo



facebook.com/UofIExtensionBDO



twitter.com/ogle4h



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).

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture by the Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and University of Illinois.