



Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Impact.

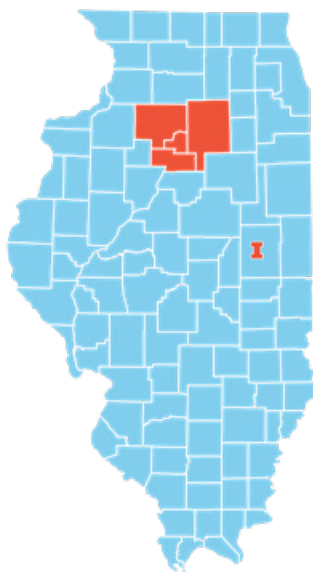


Serving Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, and Putnam Counties
Illinois Extension Impact Report 2024





Erin Orwig
County Director



A Year of Growth

2024 was a great year for our Extension programs in Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall, and Putnam counties. Our program areas have made an extra effort to work together to provide more programming and support more projects in our area. Youth development, SNAP-Ed, nutrition and wellness, Master Gardeners, and commercial ag were all involved in a community garden in Marshall County that produced over 600 pounds of produce and a school garden in LaSalle County that harvested over 392 pounds of produce. Staff plans to take the knowledge gained from these two projects and apply it to a school garden in Bureau County for 2025. It's great to see projects give back to their communities.

Our programs have worked to bring safer walking routes to schools, showcased a youth public speaking contest, assisted families in making healthy and affordable meals, and educated landowners on a variety of topics. We could not do all these programs without the support of our communities. We partner with schools, libraries, farm bureaus, and health departments, just to name a few. The list is extensive, and we are able to increase our impact in our communities through these partnerships, networks, and coalitions.

We held our first Master Naturalist training program since 2019 this fall. Participants spent time in a classroom learning about

topics and then went out in the field to apply their knowledge. Some of the topics were entomology, tree identification, wetlands, ornithology, geology, and soil. We are excited to start offering new programs in our communities with recent graduates. Be on the lookout for those classes!

Please like and follow our Facebook page (University of Illinois Extension: Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall & Putnam counties) to be aware of the program schedule and view pictures of staff in the communities. It will make you realize the wide range of events and programs that occur in the four counties. It's great to see pictures of people making bread, making and preserving jams, harvesting community gardens, identifying invasive species, and learning new skills in the kitchen. Along with our in-person classes, there are also many opportunities for online classes given by Extension staff around the state.

We greatly appreciate all our participants, volunteers, and donors. We could not continue to grow and provide our communities with such high levels of programming without all of them. Local donations are matched at the state level, remain local, and provide funding for our programs.

Erin Orwig
County Extension Director

Cover photo: Youth wash off potatoes that they grew and harvested at Northwest Elementary School.

Photo by Karina Delgado

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



Economy



Environment



Food and Agriculture



Health



Partnerships



Technology and Discovery



Workforce Excellence

2024 Engagement

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

730

Communities Served

805K+

Program Attendees

9.7M+

Webpage Views

22.4M+

Social Media Impressions

2.5M+

YouTube Impressions

547

Educational Sessions/Week
(28K+ Annually)

90

Online Courses Accessed by
12K+ People

12,484

Local Government Education
Webinar Reach

1,840

4-H Clubs

67,917

Fair Exhibits

20,339

Members

261,012

4-H Experiences

Partnerships

5,563

Program Volunteers

266

Community Gardens

2,922

School and Community Partners

\$15,735,213

Value of Volunteer Contributions

\$514,316

Value of Donated Produce Grown or Facilitated

\$4.7M+

External Funds Secured for SNAP-Ed Partners



Learn. Connect. Advocate.



Master Naturalist program returns

The Master Naturalist program leverages the expertise of university scientists and environmental partners to train adult volunteers to be environment advocates by putting research into action. The goal is to empower nature enthusiasts to put their unique skills to use through local conservation and restoration activities. This program trains participants to be environmental stewardship volunteers who help impact local communities by volunteering at local natural areas.

After a five-year hiatus, the Master Naturalist program returns to our communities. Nineteen new volunteers stepped in to become Master Naturalists. Participants underwent six weeks of training, including 40 hours of classroom instruction and field trips to Starved Rock State Park, Nachusa Grasslands, and Dayton Bluffs Preserve.

"I'm so happy that we have such a great new group of volunteers. I learned just as much from them as I did from our classes, and I look forward to seeing what the new class will contribute to our future programs," Emily Hansen, agriculture educator, stated.



788 Hours

Master Naturalists Volunteer Time



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

Since completing their training, volunteers have worked on various projects in our local community. Volunteers are working towards completing their hours of service over the next year with partner organizations such as Starved Rock State Park, Dayton Bluffs Preserve, and Dixon Waterfowl Refuge.

The Master Naturalist program is essential for the local communities. Master Naturalists work on habitat restoration projects, present at community events, and partner with 4-H on youth programs that foster a love and appreciation for nature. Illinois Extension is excited to continue to grow and make the community aware of the Master Naturalist programs.



Volunteers learned several subjects such as geology, archaeology, wetlands, ornithology, forestry, and entomology.



Meet Susan Glassman

Glassman is an Extension educator whose responsibilities center on family and consumer sciences, specifically nutrition and wellness. She provides programming in chronic disease prevention and management, food safety, and food preservation. She helps individuals set SMART goals for healthier lifestyles that promote lifelong learning through making small changes. Glassman teaches hands-on food labs and nutrition topics.



Nutrition and Wellness
Educator Susan
Glassman.

Mastering the art of slow cooking

At Bureau County, participants learn about serving food safely and making healthier recipes in the slow cooker. During class, a dessert was served, which was a hit. It resulted in many of the participants saying they were going to get their slow cookers out and use them. Some were also going to update to a new slow cooker with features that were presented.

College students cook and learn together

Project Success from Illinois Valley Community College met at the campus culinary kitchen to make lunch together. They made recipes from our EAT.MOVE.SAVE. website for baked chicken nuggets, garlic broccoli, and homemade ranch dressing. Students developed meal prep and cooking skills while learning to choose budget-friendly foods.

Bread and jam fun with Glassman

Glassman offered several make-and-take classes. Participants enjoyed cooking in the kitchen and making bread and jams to take home and enjoy. In all classes, everyone gained knowledge of safe cooking and developed cooking skills. In one make-and-take class: "Let it Dough," one participant left a heartfelt comment: "My grandpa used to make bread all the time, and I watched as a kid. I wish I learned more from him before he passed away, but this class brought back many memories. Thank you for refreshing my memory of how to make bread and teaching me new recipes."



Participants learned the art of bread making.

From the garden to the table

The Garden to Table program featured using fresh produce to make delicious summer salsa recipes. Lacon Community Center featured the program as part of their Lunch 'n Learn program. Attendees enjoyed learning about salsa and had fun making a fruit and vegetable salsa. They loved learning about the different ways to make salsa. They all agreed they learned a lot and loved cooking together.

I am going to make more salsa now, thank you so much for sharing how easy it is to make something fresh and delicious.

Class Participant

The art of soup-making

Participants attended the Soupology Class in Putnam County, where types of soups were presented, and information was shared on recommendations for cutting back on sodium and increasing vegetables. While making samples, Glassman shared to season before serving. After enjoying the sample, one person said, "Can I have the leftovers? That was so good, I can't believe you only added a little bit of salt."



Attendees at Soupology class explored a world of flavors, learned about the nutritional benefits, and even had some delicious cowboy soup together.



21,980
Program Attendance



1,047
Educational Sessions



Check out our Nutrition and Wellness programs
extension.illinois.edu/blmp/nutrition-wellness



LASALLE COUNTY 4-H: BUILDING LEADERS

4-H Federation clubs are groups of 4-H members working together on leadership, decision-making, and community events. 4-H youth in eighth grade or higher can join the Federation club and learn skills like public speaking and teamwork. Additionally, 4-H youth can work as a team and help others improve their community. Each year, the Federation votes on community services they would like to provide within their community. The Federation club acquires funds through volunteering at the county fair food stand and must be good stewards of those funds. This year, LaSalle County 4-H Federation Youth Leadership Club sponsored a holiday meal drive and Easter basket community service for PADS Illinois Valley Public Shelter Facility in Peru.



MUSIC, MEALS, AND A MISSION

The LaSalle County Friends of Extension & 4-H were busy this year supporting Illinois Extension with dancing and eating delicious barbeque. LaSalle County Friends of Extension & 4-H supports outreach educational programs for LaSalle County Extension and 4-H programs. Friends of Extension hosted their annual dinner fundraiser at Knights of Columbus Hall in Ottawa. The night featured a performance from the Windy City Dueling Pianos, dinner from Stone Jug Barbeque, and a silent auction. During the spring season, the group held a drive-thru fundraiser dinner featuring Stone Jug Barbeque. All proceeds from both fundraisers directly benefited LaSalle County 4-H Youth Program, empowering and preparing youth for success.



BUREAU COUNTY 4-H GIVES BACK

Food insecurity remains an ongoing challenge in Bureau County, where many individuals and families struggle to meet their basic needs. The lack of access to nutritious and affordable food has increased hunger within the community. To combat food insecurity, organizations came together to ensure that families across the counties would receive assistance in the form of canned goods. A collective effort by Bureau County 4-H, Bureau County Farm Bureau Young Leaders, and Bureau Valley Middle School FFA led to the successful collection of 384 lbs. of nonperishable food. Donated food was distributed throughout food pantries in Princeton, Sheffield, and Walnut. Through this collaboration, Bureau County 4-H was able to impact the community positively. The partnerships formed through this effort helped strengthen the community's ability to give back and support its most vulnerable members.



BUREAU COUNTY IL 4-H CLUBS, INC.

Bureau County IL 4-H Clubs, Inc. is a fundraising organization founded to support Illinois Extension and 4-H in Bureau County. Their board of directors oversees fundraising annually at the 4-H food stand & Bureau County Fair Grandstand during the Bureau County Fair. In addition, they manage the main food tent and drive-thru for the Princeton Homestead festivities and provide a food stand at the Bureau County 4-H Fair each year. These fundraisers enable them to fund the Bureau County budget annually and obtain match monies to support their local Bureau County 4-H program. The board of directors' officers are Nolan Faber, president; David Faber, vice president; Lynn Delaney, treasurer; and Lora Corban, secretary. Board members are Debbie Faber, Francis Morse, Sherry Allen, Luke Schultz, William Anderson, Kenn Corban, Jonathan Smith, Katie Abell, and Amanda Andruch. We are very grateful for their hard work and annual support.



Addressing food insecurity through youth gardening in Marshall-Putnam counties

Food insecurity continues to affect many families in our communities, underscoring the importance of sustainable practices and access to fresh, healthy produce. In response, Marshall-Putnam 4-H and Master Gardeners joined together through the 4-H Learn-Grow-Share SPIN Club. Under the guidance of 4-H leader and Master Gardener Bethany Salisbury and other Master Gardener volunteers, 4-H members cultivated over 700 pounds of fresh produce. The fresh produce was available for free through a community blessing box. Approximately 15 community members accessed the blessing box weekly during the growing season. Over the past months, 4-H members mastered the art and science of starting a garden. Youth learned about healthy soil, composting, worm ecosystems, seed starting, and square-foot gardening, maximizing plant growth in small spaces. Through these activities, participants developed essential gardening skills and a deeper appreciation for nature and sustainable living.

“This experience has been incredibly rewarding for our club members,” said Bethany Salisbury, 4-H Learn-Grow-Share SPIN Club leader. “They have not only learned essential gardening skills but also developed a deeper appreciation for nature and the food we eat.” This program was made possible through grant support from Illinois Extension, material donations from Saratoga Homestead and Home Depot, and the generosity of Henry United Methodist Church, which provided the garden space. The 4-H Learn-Grow-Share SPIN Club has equipped youth with lifelong gardening skills and has made strides in addressing food insecurity within the community. This program exemplifies the power of youth-led initiatives to create a sustainable and healthier future for all.



952

4-H Club Members



1,472 Hours

Master Gardeners Volunteer Time



Educators at Boggio's Orchard tour.

Agricultural literacy program engages educators through professional development

Educator training is at the heart of Illinois Ag in the Classroom's agriculture literacy efforts. To reach these individuals, Ag in the Classroom provides Summer Agricultural Institutes across the state to provide exposure and resources to the local ag industries. Participants receive professional development through tours, discussions, speakers, and hands-on activities.

This institute was absolutely AMAZING! I learned soooo much! We saw Milan, Ashton, Amboy, Tampico, Sheffield, Hennepin, and Granville! I'm super excited to teach ag to my class!

Educator participant

Marshall-Putnam's Ag in the Classroom partnered with area AITCs to reach 11 teachers from Bureau, Lee, and Rock Island counties. Over the course of four days, educators traveled around the six counties involved in planning and facilitating this event to visit unique and diverse agricultural businesses and organizations. The first day featured Bureau and Whiteside counties, which included stops to Prairie Hybrids and Precision Feedworx. The final day featured Putnam County agriculture. Educators toured Altman Plants, Boggio's Orchard, and had a presentation.

The purpose of a Summer Ag Institute is to engage and educate teachers on ways to bring ag literacy into their classrooms, and while some of the participants already incorporate ag literacy into their classrooms, several could not wait to start.



Willard Mott, IVCC Ag Instructor, showed students the soybean variety trials during Fall Field Day.



Learning together through Extension's research

Illinois Valley Community College, in partnership with Illinois Extension, hosted its annual Fall Field Day. IVCC Ag + Extension's Fall Field Day gives students and the community a chance to learn about the latest research updates and topics in agriculture. This year's event showcased research conducted at the IVCC research and demonstration plots and throughout the state by University of Illinois researchers. The field day attracted over 40 participants to the Agricultural Education Center to hear presentations from University of Illinois researchers and local industry professionals.

Willard Mott and Jennifer Timmers, IVCC agriculture instructors and program co-coordinators, started the event with an overview of IVCC's ag program and its growth over the years. Nick Seiter, Extension entomologist, spoke about his soybean pest trials at IVCC and some of the common insect pests he had seen in fields this past year. Kevin Rothzen, Channel Seed technical agronomist, spoke about the corn and soybean variety trials at IVCC and what corn and soybean trait packages are currently developing. Emily Hansen, Extension agriculture educator, talked about soil health and the soil microbial community. Lastly, Chance Riggins, University of Illinois crop sciences professor, spoke about industrial hemp research and the hemp certificate programs available at the University of Illinois.

"We were happy to help put on such a nice event for our community and students," said Emily Hansen, ag program coordinator. "We look forward to continuing to build a strong partnership between University of Illinois Extension and IVCC."

Farmland Owners Conference sparks inspiration

The 2024 Farmland Owners Conference left attendees inspired, informed, and empowered. The event, held at Illinois Valley Community College, brought together over 220 landowners, agribusiness representatives, and industry experts to discuss the latest trends, challenges, and opportunities in agriculture. The conference featured a diverse lineup of presenters, with breakout sessions covering various topics, from land values to organic production.

The 2024 Farmland Owners Conference demonstrated the need for education for current and future farmland owners. By providing a platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and collaboration, the event empowered landowners to make informed decisions and secure the future of their land.



Over 220 attendees from seven states attended the Farmland Owner Conference.

"My brother and I attended this conference together, and we are very grateful for some new ideas and resources," said one attendee. "We are both farm kids, gone for a couple decades, and now trying to figure out how to be of more help to our father and figure out our role with the farm in the future. I would absolutely attend a similar workshop in the future."

Illinois Extension looks forward to the future of the Farmland Owners Conference and continuing to serve the agricultural community's needs.

2024 Ag and Natural Resource Program



67
Educational Sessions



2,157
Program Attendance



Learn more about the local Agriculture program
extension.illinois.edu/blmp/agriculture



Economic Development



Bringing tourism to our communities

Erin Orwig, county director, had completed a needs assessment in the area and determined that many small rural communities and tourist attractions in larger rural communities were run primarily by volunteers with little or no experience in marketing tourism assets.

In response, Pam Schallhorn presented the Marketing Rural Tourism program to the mayor of Marseilles and the city's planning commission. Schallhorn is a regional extension specialist in community and economic development. Her territory covers 39 counties in western and central Illinois, including LaSalle, Bureau, Marshall, and Putnam counties. In the fall of 2023, Schallhorn developed the Marketing Rural Tourism program.

The program provides insights into identifying and marketing rural tourism assets and includes information about the I-Rural Toolkit. A University of Illinois professor, in collaboration with Illinois Extension, developed the toolkit to aid communities in planning, designing, and implementing rural tourism projects with evidence-informed processes supporting local entrepreneurship, fostering collaboration, and developing local workforce opportunities. Schallhorn was also asked to present Marketing Rural Tourism at the Midwest Community Development Institute in Springfield.

During 2024, Schallhorn worked with Jerry Foster, community champion at Resource Bank, to provide Illinois Extension

programming and research-based information for several small rural communities in Lee, LaSalle, and Dekalb counties. The communities included Mendota, Shabbona, Lee, Leland, Sandwich, Earlville, Somonauk and others. The first program, Planning for the Future of Small Rural Communities, was developed and delivered by Schallhorn in Leland. The Illinois Extension workshop was designed for community leaders and local officials from small rural communities looking to improve their small towns' quality of life and economic well-being. During the workshop, participants were presented with several evidence-based strategies for enhancing entrepreneurial development and harnessing the power of rural tourism, as well as some insights on ways to fund community projects.

The takeaway from the group of about 24 local mayors, county officials, economic development professionals, and business owners was that they wanted additional information on sanitation systems, marketing tourism assets, and code enforcement. Schallhorn participated in an informational meeting on sanitation options held in Dekalb and sponsored by the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District. Several communities were presented with the opportunity to connect their systems with the KWRD at significant cost savings.

In October, Pam presented Marketing Rural Tourism for the same group at Resource Bank's Quilhot Schoolhouse in Shabbona. She continues to provide resources and information to several group members, including the Mayor of Leland and her Economic Development Committee, who are working to create a National Register Commercial Historic District downtown.



Amy Adams, Northwest's art teacher and school garden coordinator, checks out the latest harvest with a participant.



A multi-disciplinary project to improve food access

In LaSalle County, the rate of food insecurity is at 13.4%. That's 1 in 10 adults and 1 in 8 children. Food insecurity refers to the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Growing Together is a multi-state SNAP Education project that aims to increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables in food-insecure communities by working with local Master Gardeners to increase food access to low-income households. This program improves food access by combining four program areas: SNAP Education, Master Gardeners, Nutrition and Wellness, and 4-H.

The program focuses on three main goals: improving food utilization through nutrition education and site-based environmental and/or policy changes, increasing food access for families in need by boosting the supply of fresh produce, and enhancing community capacity to sustain food access through partnership development. This involves increasing knowledge and ability to produce food and raising awareness of food insecurity issues.



4-H organized fun garden-related activities, such as a seed mosaic art project during one of the harvest events.

The garden started at Northwest Elementary School in LaSalle. Master Gardeners ran a Seeds to Harvest program, a six-week learning series offered to third graders. Master Gardeners provided expertise on gardening practices and ongoing support to garden volunteers, as well as recruiting volunteers for garden maintenance and harvest.

During this series, Master Gardeners taught students how to plant seeds and harvest food. At the end of the program, students made salads with various leafy greens and radishes that they grew. The third grade's "Green Thumb" garden club also participated by planting seeds and plants after school to grow vegetables in raised beds over the summer.

Alongside these contributions, two individuals have dedicated a lot of time to Northwest's garden over the years. One is Amy Adams, the school's garden club coordinator and art teacher, and community member Bill Bowers. Bill started the garden over 30 years ago at the request of his daughter, Heather, who was in third grade at the time. Although Heather passed away unexpectedly in 2014, Bill has continued this garden for third graders every year since, with the help of his wife, Patty. Maintaining this garden is very special to them, and they hope it continues for many more years.

In response to Bill's request for improvements to the quality of the soil, efforts are being made to use the remaining Growing Together Illinois funds to amend the soil. A Master Gardener volunteer took soil samples to be tested at a soil lab. With the help of Illinois Extension horticulture specialists, they will determine the best approach to improve the soil. Emily Hansen, commercial agriculture educator, recommended planting tillage radish this fall to help with soil compaction.

Throughout June and July, the garden club and their families were invited to harvest from the garden and take produce home. By the last harvest in August, they had surpassed their goal of 200 pounds of produce, reaching about 320 pounds. When students were getting ready to return to school, all Northwest families from pre-K to fifth grade were invited to take produce home during their back-to-school open house.



SNAP-Education provided a tasting of herbed tomato salad and offered garden recipe booklets using recipes from the Eat.Move.Save. website.



3,113

Nutrition Education Participants



30

Partnerships with K-12 Schools

STAFF

Erin Orwig
County Extension Director

Shasta Hladovack
4-H Youth Development
Educator

Susan Glassman
Nutrition and Wellness
Educator

Patrobas Wafula
SNAP-Ed Educator

Emily Hansen
Commercial Agriculture
Educator

Karina Delgado
Marketing and
Communications Coordinator

Bettyann Harris
Master Gardener and Master
Naturalist Coordinator

Sarah Poignant
4-H Program Coordinator
Bureau County

Toni Pienta
4-H Program Coordinator
LaSalle County

Anne Scheel
4-H Program Coordinator
Marshall-Putnam Counties

Katharine Girone
Ag in the Classroom
Program Coordinator

Sherry Todas
SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator

Jani Kidd
SNAP-Ed Program Coordinator

Micheal Baumann
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Leigh Ann Delaney
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Kristin Ingram
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Michelle Uphoff
Office Support Specialist

Brooke Welte
Office Support Specialist
Bureau County

Ashley Baron
Office Support Associate
LaSalle County

Marilyn Smith
Office Support Associate
Marshall-Putnam Counties

Lisa Corcoran
Office Support (Clerical)
LaSalle County

Lynn Delaney
Marketing and Fund
Development Support

Aaron Lindstrom
4-H STEM/STEAM Support
Marshall-Putnam Counties

OFFICE INFORMATION

Bureau, LaSalle, Marshall,
Putnam Work Site
815 North Orlando Smith Road
Oglesby, IL 61348
(815) 224-0889

Bureau County
Extension Office
850 Thompson Street
Princeton, IL 61356
(815) 875-2878
Mon - Fri, 8AM - 4:30 PM

LaSalle County
Extension Office
1689 North 31st Road
Ottawa, IL 61350
(815) 433-0707
Mon - Fri, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

Marshall-Putnam
Extension Office
509 Front Street
Henry, IL 61537
(309) 364-2356
Mon/Wed/ Fri, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

ONLINE



facebook.com/UIEBLMP



extension.illinois.edu/blmp



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.