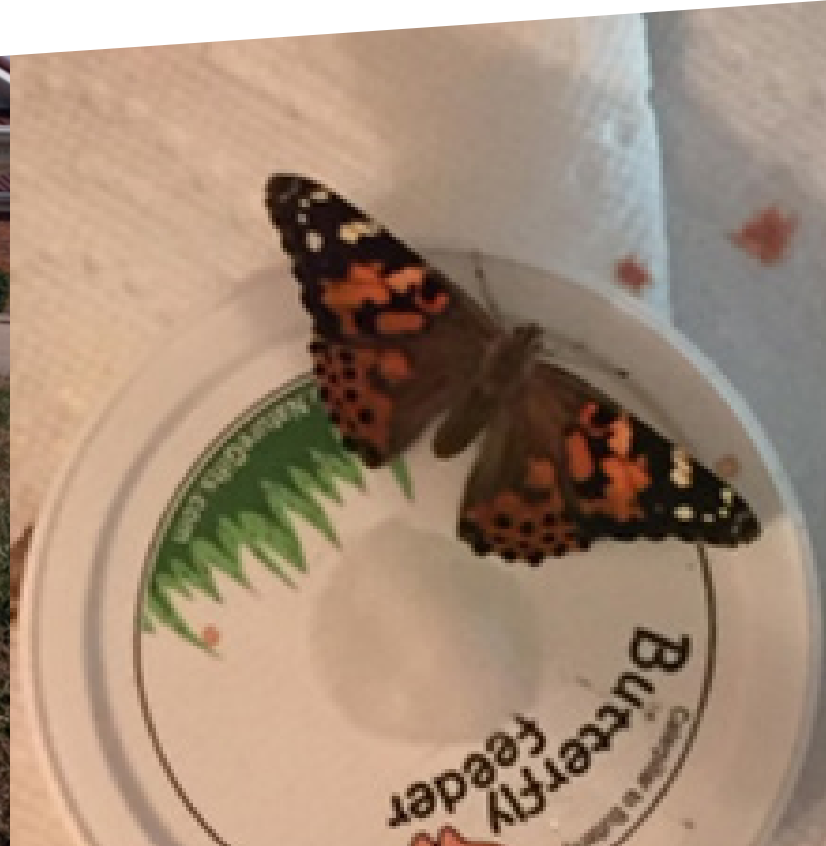




Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

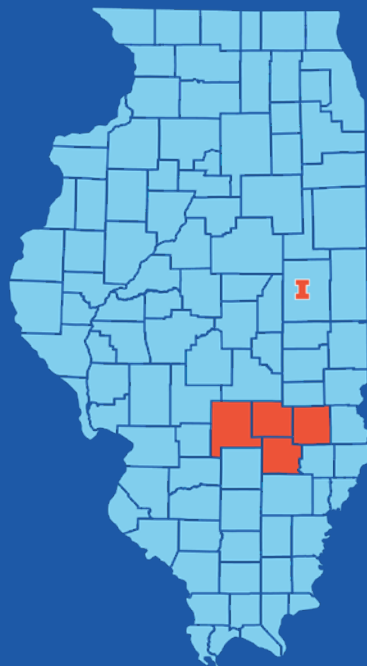


2020 IMPACT REPORT

University of Illinois Extension
Clay, Effingham, Fayette, & Jasper Counties

Illinois Extension

University of Illinois Extension provides practical education you can trust to help people, businesses, and communities solve problems, develop skills, and build a better future. Based in the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, Extension is the statewide outreach program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



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A Message from the Chancellor

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is an economic engine and a driver of innovation, deeply rooted in the Illinois prairie and engaged statewide, from Cook County to Cairo. Illinois Extension brings the university to your doorstep. Extension

educators live and work alongside you in every county, allowing the university to support local leaders, businesses, farmers, and residents to address grand challenges and everyday problems with practical, research-based solutions. As a youth, my own 4-H experience inspired a rewarding career in agricultural research and higher education. Today, it's an honor to lead this great public university and deepen its commitment to serve the people of Illinois.

Robert J. Jones
Chancellor, University of Illinois



A Message from the County Director

On behalf of University of Illinois Extension and the staff serving Clay, Effingham, Fayette, and Jasper counties, I want to thank you for your continued support.

Extension remains committed to bringing you relevant, reliable, and responsive education to improve lives and economies throughout the communities in which we live and work. 2020 proved to be an interesting year as the pandemic brought the world to a screeching halt. Extension, like so many businesses globally, started working remotely, adapting and designing programs that could be delivered virtually to our clients and stakeholders.

Despite the challenges of the new normal, Extension adapted and moved forward. We welcomed a new horticulture educator to help meet the needs of our four-county region. We partnered with the state to create free internet access locations for our communities.

Extension is thankful for local support from county boards, farm bureaus, 4-H and Extension foundations, home and community education associations, individuals, and businesses. We are excited about the year ahead. Visit extension.illinois.edu/cefd often for upcoming programs and events, news releases, and research-based information you can trust. I look forward to our continued partnership as we build for the future.

Carl Baker
County Director



Master Gardeners

2020 was a challenging year for Master Gardeners in Clay, Effingham, Fayette, and Jasper counties, as the COVID-19 pandemic restricted many of their usual activities. They eagerly anticipate returning to the gardens and hope to reach new audiences, integrate new varieties of plants, and meet old friends. Master Gardener plans for 2021 include weekend gardener workshops, community gardens, butterfly and pollinator projects, plant sales, and various community events. It is a year to look forward to new beginnings.



Sunflowers continued to flourish in Vandalia's Little Community Garden in 2020.



Welcome, Mary Fischer!

Mary Fischer joined Extension serving Clay, Effingham, Fayette, and Jasper counties in 2020 as a horticulture educator. She works with both adults and youth, focusing on home, community, and school gardens.

Fischer hit the ground running and already has several key projects in the works. She is an FAA-certified remote pilot and plans to implement a 4-H special interest club using drones. She coordinates Master Gardener and Master Naturalist volunteers, providing their training, continuing education, seasonal events, and community outreach programs related to horticulture and conservation.

Fischer is also leading a statewide group of agriculture and natural resource educators to create pilot programs for Junior Master Naturalists (9-12 years old) and Teen Master Naturalists (13-17 years old). Using the current Illinois Master Naturalist program as a guide, the pilot programs will include the following topics: botany, geology and soils, people and natural resources, water, and zoology.



<https://extension.illinois.edu/cefj/horticulture>



Salt Creek Watershed Plan Development

University of Illinois Extension partnered with the Department of Urban and Regional Planning to develop a plan for the Salt Creek Watershed, a sub-watershed of the Little Wabash, located primarily in Effingham and Cumberland counties. The project was made possible by support from Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and a \$12,585 grant from Lumpkin Family Foundation.

University students contributed significantly to the watershed plan's progress. In February, Jennifer Jones hosted a stakeholder meeting at the Extension office in Effingham, which was attended by more than 50 people. It provided a unique opportunity for the students to hear directly from local stakeholders about their water quality concerns and what they hoped a watershed plan would achieve. Their feedback was incorporated directly into the plan.

Substantial progress was made toward completing the watershed plan and work will continue in 2021, including at least one more meeting to gather stakeholder feedback on the plan.



Dr. Daniel Schneider addressed Salt Creek Watershed stakeholders in February 2020, prior to COVID-19 restrictions.



Jennifer Jones addresses stakeholders at the Jasper County farmer-focused Embarras River Watershed meeting in January 2020, prior to COVID-19 restrictions.

Embarras River Watershed Farmer Meeting

In January 2020, Jennifer Jones facilitated a series of farmer-focused meetings throughout the Embarras River Watershed. The meetings were part of a collaborative effort to update the existing watershed management plan by Extension, Illinois Farm Bureau, local farm bureaus and soil and water conservation districts, and Northwater Consulting.

Meetings were held in Champaign, Edgar, Douglas, Coles, Clark, Cumberland, Jasper, Crawford, and Richland/Lawrence counties. Nearly 190 farmers shared their thoughts and concerns. The two most common concerns throughout the watershed were field erosion and streambank erosion, though many others were mentioned. Attendees also provided feedback on tools and resources that would help to address their concerns. All of the information gathered at these meetings will be incorporated into the Embarras River Watershed plan update.



SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION

SNAP-Ed works with Illinois families in need to make the healthier choice an easier choice. Through classes, workshops and collaboration with community partners to adopt research-based solutions encouraging healthier nutrition and activity choices, SNAP-Ed positively affects families and communities.

In 2020, SNAP-Ed virtual education and resources:



Addressed community partner needs by providing resources and collaboration opportunities



Provided live, virtual classes families could join from their own phone, tablet, or computer



Distributed print materials to families on topics such as recipes made with common pantry ingredients



Increased reach via social media, text, and e-news with relevant nutrition and activity information



Created a new community food resource map, Find Food Illinois, on the Eat. Move. Save. website

In February at Flora Elementary School, our nutrition lesson talked about the importance of brushing our teeth, along with foods and drinks that were good for our teeth, like cheese, yogurt, and milk. At the next lesson, students were excited to tell me that they had brushed their teeth the night before!

Erin Maxwell, SNAP-Ed community worker

SNAP-Ed Community Partnerships



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K-12 Schools



7

Agencies or Community Centers



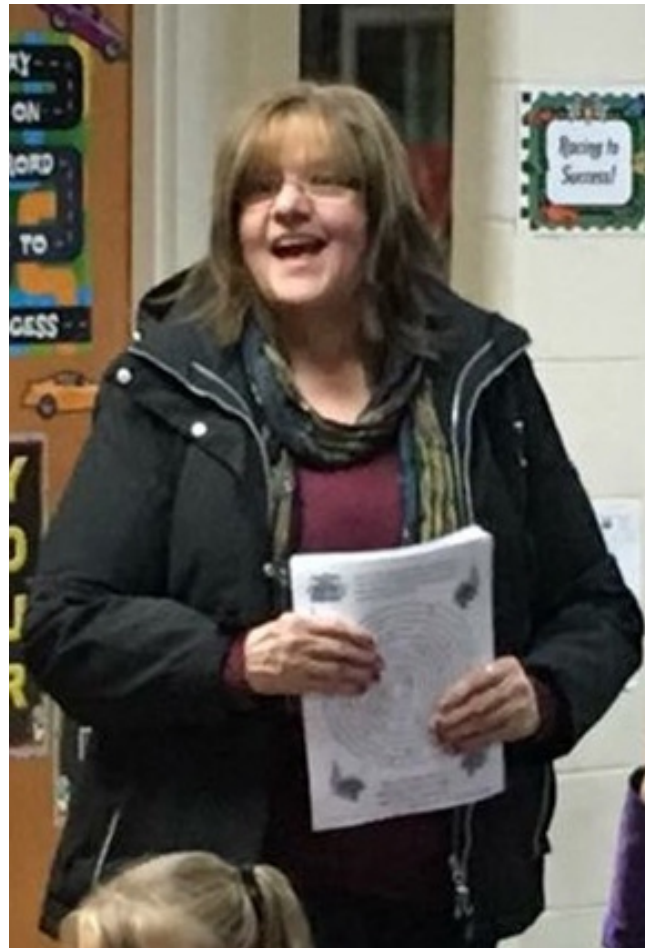
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Emergency Food Sites



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Early Childhood



Jo Stine at Vandalia Elementary School prior to COVID-19 restrictions.

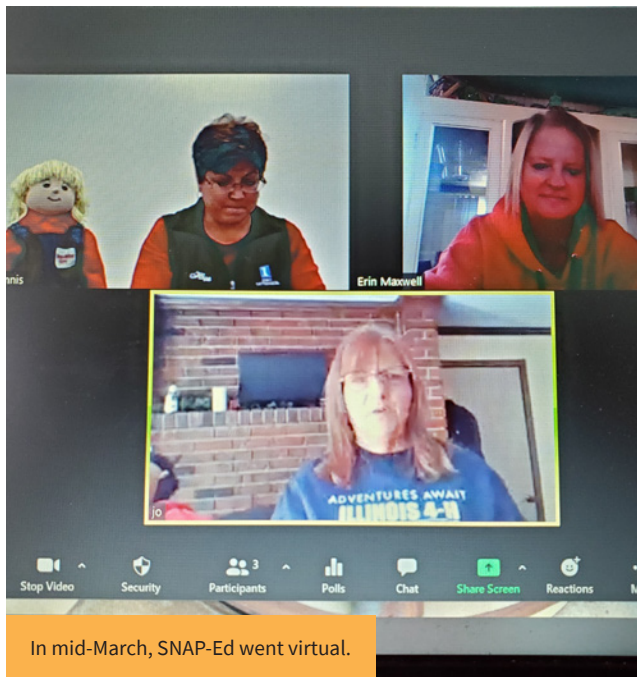
SNAP-Ed Makes a Big Impact in a Few Short Months

Before face-to-face programming came to an abrupt halt in the spring of 2020, SNAP-Ed staff made an impact in local schools and food pantries.

Erin Maxwell, Clay County SNAP-Ed community worker, reached 676 youth between January and March through the OrganWise Guys and Color Me Healthy programs. She also provided recipes and nutritional handouts to Clay County Ministerial Alliance Food Pantry clients, helping them make healthier food choices for their families.

Jo Stine, Fayette County SNAP-Ed community worker, reached 1,792 youth between January and March through 44 classes and one afterschool program. She also supported the St. Elmo Food Pantry.

While working remotely, the SNAP-Ed team has focused on professional development and learning new ways to support clients remotely.



SNAP-Ed Thrives in a Virtual World

The SNAP-Ed program has conducted in-person training, education, and cooking demonstrations for decades. Shifting that long-standing model to virtual education during the COVID-19 pandemic certainly created some challenges — staff had to learn new platforms and tools in a very short amount of time in order to minimize disruptions in service — but, it also created unique opportunities for growth.

SNAP-Ed Educator Michelle Fombelle typically offers in-person training for a couple hundred food service workers at schools throughout the four counties in the spring and fall. During the pandemic, Fombelle began offering virtual trainings for food service workers, early childcare providers, K-12 teachers, and food pantry volunteers across the state. Demand for these webinar series has been so high that Fombelle now offers them every week. Participant feedback has been extremely positive.

SNAP-Ed Community Workers Jo Stine, Erin Maxwell, and Amanda Poe have also shifted their programming to offer recordings that elementary teachers can display in their virtual or physical classrooms. Similar recordings are planned for food pantries. The team is also working on a summer recipe book that local food pantries can include in distribution boxes.





Area Food Pantries Benefit from Nudges Grant

Over the past two years, University of Illinois Extension has partnered with Eastern Illinois Food Bank to implement the Feeding America Nudges Grant. Nudges are free or low-cost changes in food pantries that encourage their clients to make healthier food choices.

SNAP-Ed Educator Michelle Fombelle completed a pre- and post-implementation assessment using the Nutrition Environment Food Pantry Assessment Tool. Between the assessments, pantries used equipment and materials provided through the grant to make changes that would encourage healthier choices.

The Master's Hands in Newton received a glass door refrigeration unit to display fresh items, such as dairy and produce. Previously, these items were displayed in milk crates and required constant temperature checks. The grant also provided improvements to the waiting area, including a wall-mounted display for educational handouts and recipes, and a farmers market-themed play area for children.



Illinois State University Dietetics Intern Meredith Epley assisted with improvements, such as hanging signage that encourages healthier choices throughout the food pantry.



The Master's Hands' brand new glass door refrigeration unit fully stocked and ready for pantry distribution.

Clay County Ministerial Alliance in Flora also participated in the grant. Both pantries will receive a 50-inch Roku television, wall mount, and accessories to project SNAP-Ed recipe videos and virtual lessons in their waiting areas, and will have access to the Food Fund. When participating pantries order "Foods to Encourage," such as dairy, fruits, meat/fish/poultry, and fresh vegetables, the grant will cover 50% of the cost.

Fombelle, along with Educators Staci Coussens and Stephanie Acevedo, will present assessment findings at the 2021 Eastern Illinois Food Bank Conference.



<https://extension.illinois.edu/cefj/illinois-nutrition-education-programs>



This sign advertises the free WiFi service offered by Extension.

Bridging the Digital Divide

The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated what was already known about digital connectivity: millions of Americans, many in rural communities, don't have access to high-speed internet. The switch to virtual learning and working from home exposed gaps in reliable internet accessibility. Extension joined the American Connection Project in trying to fill that gap by offering free WiFi access from the parking lot of the Effingham office. An interactive map shows all of the free WiFi access locations provided by Extension and other project partners.

The Effingham location can accommodate up to 23 parking places for those interested in taking advantage of this free service.

The expansion of free WiFi access locations is a step toward narrowing the digital inequalities in the state, providing some immediate relief for Illinoisans attempting to complete work, school, and business obligations. "More than 18 million Americans do not have access to broadband internet, making the digital divide one of the greatest barriers to education access and workforce development for America's youth," said Jennifer Sirangelo, president and CEO of the National 4-H Council. "Broadband access was already a great challenge for students before the pandemic, now it's imperative that they have high-speed internet connections they can depend on."



Jennifer Jones leads Dieterich 4th graders through a hands-on activity, pre-COVID, to help them visualize what a healthy soil may look like.

The Importance of Healthy Soil

In January 2020, Jennifer Jones, Dana Homann, and Patti Logan collaborated to present the Healthy Soils Carbon Soil Investigation Challenge to fourth graders at Dieterich Elementary. Through lessons and hands-on activities, students learned why healthy soil is so important and about conservation practices, such as no-tillage and cover crops, that can help protect our soil. They worked in teams to engineer a minimum disturbance planter.

In the fall, Jones and Homann, with the help of Effingham County 4-Her Anthony Kreke, returned to the classrooms for Water Connects Us All, teaching students about current water quality challenges. Hands-on activities demonstrated both agricultural and urban conservation practices that can be utilized to protect water resources, including saturated buffers, wetlands, bioswales, and rain gardens.

Escape Boxes

To make learning parliamentary procedures interesting and interactive for young 4-H members, Extension educators used a hands-on activity based on the escape room concept. Older 4-H members were enlisted to keep the activity relevant and age-appropriate.

Eight containers were nested inside each other with seven clues that would unlock a container if solved correctly. Working in teams, participants solved clues pertaining to various aspects of parliamentary procedure used during 4-H club meetings. Each correct answer unlocked a container, leading to the next container and the next clue.

Escape boxes were also used in STEM activities, providing a fun, hands-on way for youth to further process classroom lessons.



Participants work to unlock their boxes by solving the clues provided.



Pictured (from left to right) are Illinois Horse Fair Queen Alex Osborne and Jasper County Horse Judging Team members Taylor Slough, Chloe Jansen, and Virgil Jansen.

Jasper County 4-H

The Jasper County 4-H Horse Judging Team kicked off the year with a third place win overall at the Illinois Horse Fair. In the fall, the team helped organize the 4-H Horse Workshop, which gave 4-H members an opportunity for hands-on practice in showmanship. The team has gained new members throughout the year, making additional events a possibility in 2021.

Jasper County Extension offers Afterschool Adventures for third through sixth graders once a month during the school year. Extension staff organize each session and experienced local volunteers present the subject matter. Jasper County 4-H Ambassadors and Federation members assist with sessions developing leadership skills. Unfortunately, face-to-face sessions were reduced this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

“4-H to Go” in Fayette County

When 4-H staff in Fayette County were unable to conduct in-person programming due to COVID-19, they created activity sheets based on popular project areas that many schools enthusiastically distributed with their sack lunch service. These “4-H to Go” packets exposed students to aerospace, health, visual arts, natural resources, and more!



One of the solar cars created by the students in R.I.S.E.

Disaster Preparedness

Through an ongoing partnership with the Fayette YMCA and Vandalia Afterschool Program, Extension offered a course on disaster preparedness to middle school students in January. Participants developed a family plan, learned first aid basics from local EMTs, reviewed disaster types with the Fayette County Health Department, heard about fire safety from the St. Elmo Fire Department, and built a disaster kit to keep at home.



Local EMTs demonstrate basic first aid to a group of children at the Vandalia Afterschool Program held at the Family YMCA in Vandalia.

Health Jam

4-H Health Jam introduces students to a variety of health profession careers, engages them in creative exercises, and teaches them how to keep their bodies healthy. To encourage physical activity, Vandalia Afterschool participants each received a pedometer to count their steps. They were challenged to complete 30 minutes of activity each day — nearly equivalent to walking two miles. Other activities taught youth to make healthy eating choices and how to prepare nutritious snacks. They also learned about brain health with Extension Educator Cheri Burcham.



Cheri Burcham teaches youth to make healthy eating choices at the 4-H Health Jam 2020 held at the Family YMCA in Vandalia.



Carl Baker
County Extension Director



Debbie Boley
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Fayette County



Sarah Clayton
Office Support Asst.
Jasper County



Mary Fischer
Extension Educator/
Horticulture



Michelle Fombelle
Extension Educator/
SNAP-Ed



Jackie Hahn
Office Support Assoc.
Effingham County



Dana Homann
Extension Educator/
Youth Development



Patti Logan
Program Coordinator/
4-H Effingham Co.



Sarah Luce
Program Coordinator/
4-H Clay/Fayette Co.



Erin Maxwell
Community Worker/
SNAP-Ed Clay Co.
Optional Third Line



Amanda Poe
Community Worker/
SNAP-Ed Effingham Co.



Jo Stine
Community Worker/
SNAP-Ed Fayette Co.



Katie Turkal
Program Coordinator/
4-H Jasper Co.



Jennifer Woodyard
Extension Watershed
Outreach Associate



8
Average Monthly
Releases



2,951
Facebook and
Twitter Totals



20
Average Monthly Totals



196
Total Active Volunteers

EXTENSION COUNCIL

Ms. Barb McGrew, Clay County

Ms. Deena Mosbarger, Clay County

Ms. Gretchen Simpson, Clay County

Ms. Chris Thompson, Clay County

Ms. Sandy Croft, Effingham County

Mr. Jovan DeSantos, Effingham County

Ms. Lisa Hoelscher, Effingham County

Mr. Doug McCain, Effingham County

Mr. Ben Frazier, Fayette County

Ms. JoAnn Sasse Givens, Fayette County

Ms. Julie Healy, Fayette County

Mrs. Jennifer Waggoner, Fayette County

Ms. Deborah Riddle, Jasper County

Mrs. Lindsey Vogt, Jasper County

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ONLINE



/UIExtensionCEFJ



@UIExtensionCEFJ

Cover photos: (Top left) Effingham County provided free WiFi access to local residents during COVID-19; (top right) a live butterfly from the embryology program; (bottom left) students participate in an activity during the Fayette County Health Jam; (bottom right) the children's play area at a local food pantry.

**Illinois
Extension**

College of Agricultural, Consumer & Environmental Sciences

University of Illinois, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Local Extension Councils Cooperating.

University of Illinois Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.



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

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

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