



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**2021** Addressing Local Needs,  
Solving Global Challenges  
Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery Counties

## A Message from the Acting County Director

I would like to start out by thanking our stakeholders for your patience and continued support as I navigate meeting the needs of Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties in my dual role as a nutrition and wellness educator and acting county director. Similar to 2020, 2021 was a year of change and new opportunities. This last year, the staff and our communities were able to adjust to following safety protocols, with hybrid classes offered in-person and virtually. We were incredibly grateful to return to in-person fairs, classroom instruction, and in-person workshops.

I want to give special recognition to two of our staff recognized at University of Illinois Extension's Annual Conference for their phenomenal work and impact on our community. Connie Niemann celebrated 25 spectacular years as a program coordinator in the agricultural literacy program. She works

exceptionally hard to provide professional development opportunities to the local teachers and bring agriculture into Macoupin County classrooms. Additionally, Elisha Hughes, Montgomery County 4-H program coordinator, was honored with the Program Support Excellence Award. Of the 102 counties in the state, only one program coordinator receives this recognition per year, and she deserved this award. Elisha continues to excel in reaching youth in the community in new ways.

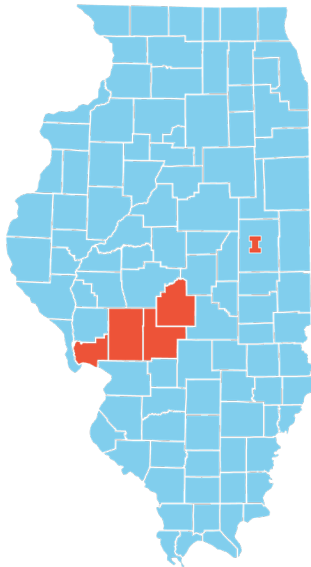
As we embrace 2022, I cannot thank you enough for your support of University of Illinois Extension in the community. We strive to provide the most up-to-date research-based information and innovative classes and workshops at a local level and continue to meet the needs of the people in Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery counties.

Lisa Peterson  
Acting County Extension Director



Lisa Peterson  
Acting County Director  
& Nutrition and  
Wellness Educator

# Staff Serving Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, & Montgomery Counties



### STAFF

Andrew Holsinger  
Horticulture Educator

Sara Marten  
4-H Youth Development  
Educator

Jennifer Russell  
Community and Economic  
Development Educator

Valerie Belusko  
Community and Economic  
Development Program  
Coordinator

Rebecca Livingston  
Christian and Montgomery  
Agricultural Literacy Program  
Coordinator

Connie Niemann  
Macoupin County Agricultural  
Literacy Program Coordinator

Kate Harding  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Elisha Hughes  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Jessica Jaffry  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Alexis McDowell  
4-H Youth Development  
Program Coordinator

Lizzy Conrady  
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Meghan Cope  
SNAP-Ed Community Worker

Cassie O'Connell  
Marketing & Communications

Lisa White  
Montgomery County Office  
Support Specialist

Lisa Klaus  
Macoupin County Office  
Support Associate

Sara Isenberg  
Christian County Office  
Support Assistant

Penny Brannan  
Jersey County Clerical

Beth Groves  
4-H Assistant

Amanda Cole  
County Director

# Think Global, Act Local

Illinois Extension embodies the land grant mission of University of Illinois, providing applied research and education to address societal grand challenges and local issues.

## Community Support Strong and Resilient Youth, Families, and Communities

- Connectedness and Inclusion
- Involvement and Leadership
- Thriving Youth

## Economy Grow a Prosperous Economy

- Economic Vitality
- Financial Wellbeing
- Workforce Preparedness/Advancement

## Environment Sustain Natural Resources in Home and Public Spaces

- Enhancing and Preserving Natural Resources
- Engagement with Home and Community Landscape

## Food Maintain a Safe and Accessible Food Supply

- Food Access
- Food Production
- Food Safety

## Health Maximize Physical and Emotional Health for All

- Chronic Disease Prevention and Management
- Social and Emotional Health
- Healthy and Safe Environments

Look for these icons throughout this report to see how Illinois Extension is meeting these grand challenges at a local level.

## Illinois Extension 2021 Statewide Highlights

### Outreach Provided

|  |   |                      |
|--|---|----------------------|
| 565<br>Illinois<br>Communities<br>Served | 335<br>Educational<br>Sessions Per Week | 84<br>Online Courses |
|--|---|----------------------|

### Partnerships Supported

|                              |                             |                              |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 6,445<br>Adult<br>Volunteers | 278<br>Community<br>Gardens | 1,000<br>School Partnerships |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|

### Learners Engaged

|                            |                                  |   |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| 8,000,000<br>Website Users | 14,450<br>Online<br>Course Users | 500,000<br>Educational Program<br>Attendees |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|

### Resources Generated

|   |   |
|---|---|
| \$14,000,000<br>Value of Volunteer<br>Contributions | \$242,000<br>Value of Donated<br>Garden Produce |
|---|---|

Extension leaders meet with local stakeholders to define annual priorities that allow us to respond to evolving and emerging needs and make meaningful progress toward important long-term outcomes. This blend of long-range focus and local accountability is a powerful strategy that ensures we stay true to our mission as we serve communities across the state.



## Extension Council Serving Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery Counties

### Council Members 2021-2022

Conner Ashlock  
Jerseyville, Jersey County

Alicia Gullidge  
Assumption, Christian County

Ann Bandy  
Taylorville, Christian County

Heather Haley  
Carlinville, Macoupin County

Connie Beck  
Litchfield, Montgomery County

Sandy Hefner  
Jerseyville, Jersey County

Tiffany Blasa  
Grafton, Jersey County

Vicki Joiner  
Carlinville, Macoupin County

Maureen Bruns  
Rosamond, Christian County

Venise McWard  
Taylorville, Christian County

Mark Duggar  
Carlinville, Macoupin County

Dennis Rahe  
Carlinville, Macoupin County

Jerome Epplin  
Litchfield, Montgomery County

Terry Trader  
Hillsboro, Montgomery County

Caleb Grover  
Stonington, Christian County



## Community Partner Award

The local Extension Council sponsors the Community Partner Award that recognizes a community partner each year.

We are incredibly proud to provide this award to four organizations within our unit:

- Christian County Farm Bureau
- Jersey State Bank
- Macoupin County Courthouse
- Montgomery County Farm Bureau

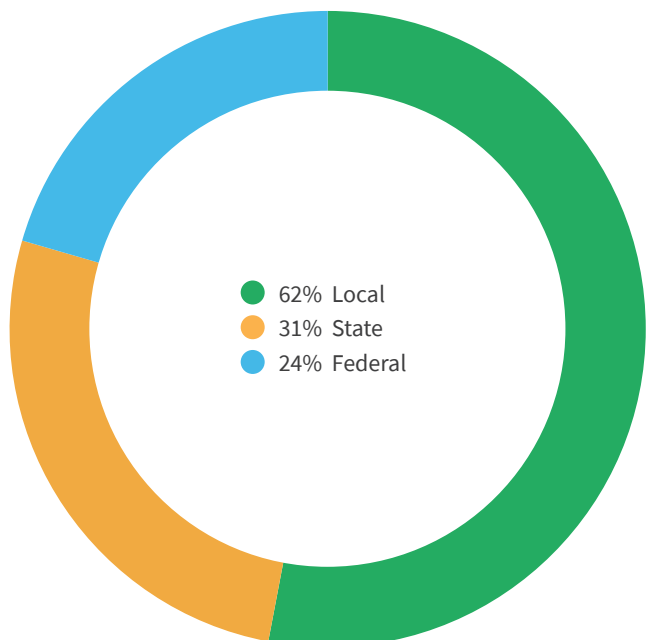
Extension impact is enhanced when we partner with like-minded organizations, foundations, and corporations committed to supporting our programs. University of Illinois Extension provides researched-based programs where youth

and adults learn new skills and gain knowledge in an area that interests them.

The Extension Council is a volunteer board that serves in an advisory role, cooperating with Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing, evaluating, and financing Extension outreach that meets the needs, interests, and resources of the local communities served.

## Financial Report

Extension is funded through a combination of locally raised, county board, state, and federal dollars, which are returned to the community through educational programming. University of Illinois Extension is a three-way funding partnership that includes the state of Illinois, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Christian, Jersey, Macoupin, and Montgomery county boards. Our SNAP-Ed programs are funded by a federal grant from the USDA. These partnerships bring thousands of programming dollars into the four counties, in addition to local contributions, state, national, and federal support.





## Christian County Farm Bureau

For several years, the Christian County Farm Bureau has supported the Christian County Agricultural Literacy Program and provided awards for the 4-H livestock shows. The Christian County Farm Bureau has always been supportive of the ag literacy program, providing monetary and volunteer assistance. They also provide books, assist with the Interactive Farm at the Christian County Agricultural Fair, and lend a helping hand with Conservation Day.



## Jersey State Bank

Throughout the years, Jersey State Bank has been a strong supporter of the local 4-H program. In 2020, Jersey State Bank awarded Jersey County 4-H with a grant for the 4-H in the Classroom program. This innovative program highlights multiple project areas in 4-H and is delivered in the local school district. Jersey State Bank also supports the annual summer 4-H shows and fair.

## Montgomery County Farm Bureau

Montgomery County Farm Bureau has supported the agricultural literacy program and nutrition and wellness programming in the unit. In partnership, the goals of improving the lives of citizens in Montgomery County and supporting local agriculture have been achieved. The partnership allows Extension to provide hands-on food preparation classes to local citizens and bring agriculture education into the local schools.



## Macoupin County Courthouse

The historical Macoupin County Courthouse has continued to be a strong supporter of the local Master Gardener program. Since 2013, it allows landscaping projects to take place on the grounds. The Macoupin County Master Gardeners have revitalized the outdated landscaping at the courthouse. The landscapes also demonstrate how low-maintenance plantings function most effectively.



## Perfect your pruning skills

Homeowners frequently purchase rose bushes and fruit trees, but do not follow up with adequate pruning care to achieve the maximum output of production. University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator Andrew Holsinger used animated drawings to demonstrate the process of pruning fruit trees.

In addition, Andrew hosted the volunteers who maintain the landscape at the Carlinville Square to a rose pruning workshop. Pruning roses can be a challenge. One must know the type of rose and proper technique to encourage the most blooms and increase the health of these attractive plants. Class participants learned about proper pruning techniques and good sanitation to increase their ability to manage common rose diseases. Additional tip sheets on pruning roses were distributed to the city hall.

The goal is to increase the confidence and skill homeowners have in pruning their trees or bushes. All participants indicated an increase in knowledge; over 85% said in the future they will properly select pruning equipment, use sanitation methods, select a proper training system for pruning, and prune fruit trees and rose bushes on an annual basis.



Whether you are new to gardening or experienced, subscribe for tips to help you along the way!  
[go.illinois.edu/SubscribeHortTips](http://go.illinois.edu/SubscribeHortTips)



Thanks to Andrew's on-site rose pruning demonstration, the roses look much better now that they are attended to properly. The handouts Andrew brought are now on file so new volunteers have a reference to use and share. We appreciate the expertise and opportunities our local Extension offers. Our community relies on Extension in numerous ways.

MARY TINDER



Craft kits and Venus flytraps (*Dionaea muscipula*) were available for youth who participated in the Carnivorous Plants class.

## Carnivorous plants can be fun

Getting youth interested in horticulture takes creativity. Showing carnivorous plants is often the trick to capture their interest. 4-H partnered with Andrew Holsinger, horticulture educator, to present the Carnivorous Plants program. The young participants, ages 8 to 12, learned the different ways carnivorous plants go about capturing their prey, as well as their unique care requirements. Youth also learned how and why carnivorous plants consume insects.

Before the online session, 4-H staff Elisha Hughes and Sara Marten distributed Venus fly trap plants and care instructions to the youth. Participants learned about other carnivorous plants and their features, as well. Youth were excited to have their own plant to care for and study. Forty-five youth participated in the online presentation.



## Pace the Plaza Walking Club combines healthy activities with fun

One of the most accessible forms of exercise is walking. Lisa Peterson, University of Illinois Extension nutrition and wellness educator, partnered with Macoupin County 4-H to promote healthy living. Check out the new informational signs created by Illinois Extension while walking the path around Carlinville Plaza. These colorful signs have nutrition and physical activity tips and fun challenges for the whole family.

The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommends 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week or 30 minutes per day. What are some of the benefits of taking a daily stroll? First, moving the body can help relieve stress and improve mood. During a ten-minute walk over lunch, the body produces hormones that can help alleviate stress and turn your day around. Other immediate benefits from exercise include lower blood pressure and better sleep quality. Being active also improves concentration and reduces body fat. Walking reduces the risk of falls and developing osteoporosis, dementia, heart disease, stroke, and some cancers. Research from Stanford University indicates walking also increases creativity.

Macoupin County 4-H'ers who participated in Pace the Plaza learned health and safety tips and walked the Plaza for some fun and fitness. Each session included an educational lesson at the start, followed by a walk, with several family members joining the activities. The program will expand to other counties in 2022.



Lisa Peterson, Extension nutrition and wellness educator, met with Macoupin County 4-H members each Monday for three weeks to teach physical fitness and walk the Carlinville Plaza.



Mary Behme, member of Lucky Birds 4-H Club in Macoupin County, practices her yoga skills while exploring the Carlinville Plaza.

I have enjoyed the seeing the signs around the Plaza, and I like to read the wellness tips. It's also nice to see other people stopping to read the signs as I walk by.

MACOUPIN COUNTY RESIDENT

## Pace the Plaza

**Start or End Here**



**Welcome to Pace the Plaza!**  
Follow the signs around Carlinville Plaza to see how far you've walked and for helpful nutrition & physical activity tips!

**Walking the full loop and a quarter back is 1/4 of a mile**

**Fun Fact:** 1 cup of a chopped red bell pepper has 3x more vitamin C than an orange.  

**Illinois Extension**

**5 laps equal 1 mile**

Enjoy pacing the plaza? Let us know, answer a few questions and enter to win a prize at [go.illinois.edu/walkcjmm](http://go.illinois.edu/walkcjmm)

Colorful signs listed each activity, nutrition, and physical activity to encourage residents to move more. Visit the Carlinville Plaza and follow the signs to learn something new and feel better with a casual stroll.



## 4-H Grab and Go Kits provide hands-on learning

Adapting to the ever-changing world around us has been on the top of the list for 4-H programming over the past year. 4-H Grab and Go Kits were developed to provide 4-H members the opportunity to explore new project areas, spark interest, and allow youth the opportunity to practice skills. Some of the topics included visual arts, outdoor adventures, cooking, and science and technology. Families said the format allowed them to work at their own pace and schedule.



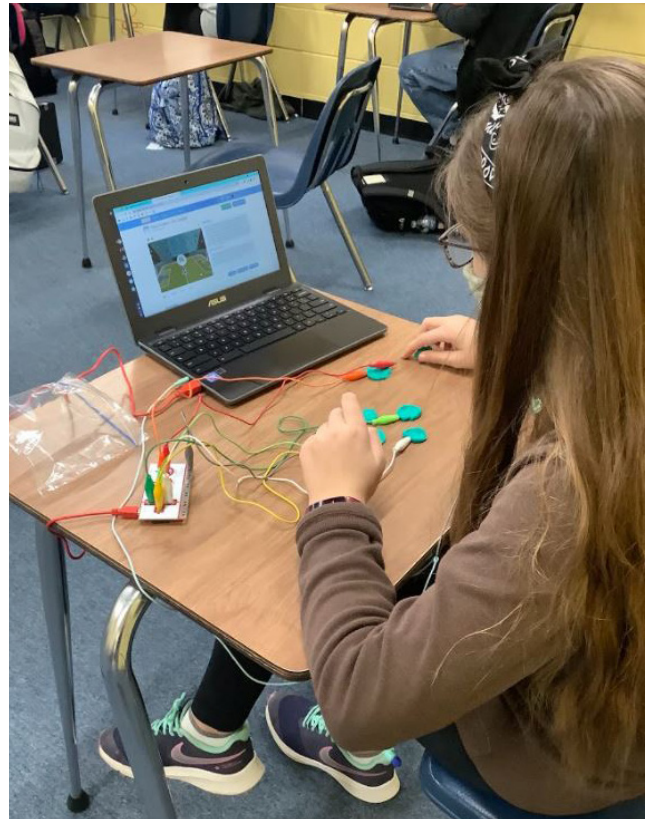
Todd Brawley, a member of Four By Fours 4-H Club in Macoupin County, created a string art pumpkin.

## Sewing can be a lifelong skill

Christian County youth attended Holiday Sewing workshops at the Christian County Extension Office and made a pillow cover. Youth learned to use a sewing machine correctly, as well as the basics of sewing. They studied the parts of a sewing machine and practiced sewing on scrap material before starting their project. Everyone completed an envelope pillow cover. Volunteers answered questions on the sewing process and machine. Many participants said they had fun and would attend more sewing workshops in the future.



Lea Johnson and Opal Ryan, members of Lads and Lassies 4-H Club in Christian County, proudly show off their pillows.



The 4-H in the Classroom STEM program taught youth to code and build computer games.

## 4-H in the Classroom

4-H in the Classroom was created by local 4-H staff to promote youth development through science, technology, engineering, and math education. Students experimented in a variety of activities, including engineering with catapults and exploring electrical circuits. Using Makey Makey, they designed games and practiced coding through the online program Scratch.

The program was funded by the Jersey State Bank of Jerseyville and reached 167 sixth grade students at Jersey Community Middle School.



Sixth grade students experimented with conductor and insulator materials to create their own electrical circuits.





## Healthy living is focus of 4-H Health Jam

4-H Health Jam is a youth wellness program that promotes a healthy lifestyle through interactive sessions and learning experiences highlighting physical fitness and healthy choices. Youth also learn about careers in the health field. Health professionals from the local community guide students in this learning opportunity.

Carlinville Intermediate School has been a 4-H Health Jam participant since 2014. This year, fifth graders were immersed in a variety of health and wellness lessons over an 8-week period. 4-H partnered with Carlinville Area Hospital for this program. Students said they loved trying new activities and challenged themselves to walk more and be more active.

Youth participated in weekly lessons during P.E. class. Professionals from Carlinville Area Hospital, D&D Fitness, and University of Illinois Extension lead sessions on a variety of topics including, mental health and self-care, healthy drinks, yoga, healthy food choices, and physical fitness. Challenge cards encouraged the youth to complete activities at home during non-school hours.

Participants were provided a pedometer and completed the “Walk Across Illinois” challenge. Youth are challenged to complete 30 to 60 minutes of daily exercise. Students were asked to log their steps and physical activity during the month of April to complete the challenge. Students had a chance to win one of two new bicycles donated by the Carlinville Area Hospital if they completed the health and wellness program.



Fifth grader at Carlinville Intermediate School working his arm muscles while trying his hardest at rope exercises.



Amanda Niemann, (left) member of Clovers 4-H Club in Montgomery County, is pictured with Ross and Maria Owens of the Holiday Shop.

## Excellence in Diversity - The Story Project

The Story Project is an intercultural program offered in Montgomery County 4-H. Youth are trained in intercultural communication, culture theory, and story writing. This program gives a unique opportunity for youth to develop a new perspective on culture and practice intercultural communication through one-on-one interaction.

Youth interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs in the county to learn about their experiences as business owners and as immigrants in America. They wrote featured articles printed in local newspapers to give the community the opportunity to learn more about these businesses and community members.

Participant learned the unique challenges of being an immigrant entrepreneur. Navigating rules and cultural differences in a community can be difficult. Often, these cultural differences can lead to them feeling left out or isolated from other community members, interviewees stated.

Intentional opportunities to learn about others can increase someone’s sense of belonging and welcome. This project created a bridge of communication between business owners and the community. The program served as an introduction to the community for business owners and gave youth a unique opportunity to develop new perspectives on culture.

The Story Project received many messages of praise and support. Several articles were shared on social media, with some receiving over 100 shares. The connections and public visibility of this program also positioned 4-H in a positive light to many in the community, and some for the first time.



## Agricultural Literacy inspires awareness in Christian and Montgomery County

Illinois is the top pumpkin producer in the U.S. Students in Christian and Montgomery counties learned about the state's pumpkin crop while strengthening their science, engineering, technology, and math skills. Students in fourth through sixth learned about simple machines as they designed and tested their own pumpkin catapult.

Students built small catapults using popsicle sticks and rubber bands. A plastic bottle cap held a piece of candy. Students were encouraged to hypothesize how far the candy pumpkins would travel. After measuring and testing different angles, students were challenged to improve their designs and create more powerful catapults.

Younger students learned about a pumpkin's life cycle from seed to pumpkin and created their own pumpkin craft that showed the insides of a pumpkin.

Having a guest in the classroom always engages students. Students have a chance to learn about a specific topic in a way that helps them get fully involved in the class. We love Ag in the Classroom! MRS. SALMON, JUNIOR HIGH SCIENCE TEACHER



Chase Rincker, a fifth grader from Taylorville Junior High School, proudly shows his bullseye from his pumpkin catapult launch.



## New 4-H Club explores farm animals

The Christian, Montgomery, and Macoupin Agricultural Literacy program partnered with 4-H to form a special interest club focusing on farm animals, including cattle, horses, sheep, goats, poultry, and swine.

Youth, ages 5 to 7, received a kit with craft supplies, directions, fact sheets on farm animals, coloring sheets, and stickers. The members of this club also participated in a six-week online session featuring that week's farm animal.

I like Ag in the Classroom because it teaches me new things and we get to do an activity. To me, it is a fun learning experiment.

TAYLORVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SIXTH GRADER

## Celebrating 25 years of Macoupin County Agricultural Literacy

Thanks to our generous sponsors, the Agricultural Literacy Program has shared the importance of agriculture and its role in our everyday lives with people of all ages for 25 years! We continue to reach students and educators with classroom programs, professional developments for teachers, hands-on learning resources, and newsletters.



2,657

Students reached in 2021



551

Educators reached in 2021



5,000+

Contacts with students and educators in 2021



## I-Rural: Reimagining Illinois rural tourism through community and Extension collaboration

Rural communities in Illinois face an increasing demand by tourists for outdoor recreation activities. This growth in demand presents an opportunity for rural communities to reimagine rural tourism and sustainable development strategies. This project is a partnership with the Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism in the College of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign and local Extension partners in the communities.

During the first year of the project, the team has:

- Conducted interviews with business owners, elected officials, tourism marketing professionals, and residents from Grafton
- Completed four hands-on visioning workshops

Grafton has developed the following insights into its rural tourism opportunities:

### VISION STATEMENT

To elevate Grafton as a premier week-long and year-round small river-town destination through the provision of family-friendly fun, cultural and historic celebration, and natural beauty.

### STRENGTHS

- Community pride and spirit to rally and help each other during challenges (floods, COVID)
- A strong entrepreneurial spirit and work ethic
- A great sense of pride regarding the accomplishments of growing businesses and turning Grafton into a budding tourist destination
- A plethora of natural beauty from the views of the river to the bluffs and the foliage

### CHALLENGES

- Limited collaboration among businesses and natural resources agencies due to limited capacities
- Need for central leadership to lead tourism development efforts
- Increase business diversification (currently there are limited retail and restaurant options)
- Lack of funding to upgrade downtown (e.g., streetscape, traffic, parking)
- Continuing and worsening floods pose a threat to businesses and growth

*This project is funded by an Extension Collaboration Grant.*



Learn more about this project!  
[go.illinois.edu/iruralprojectcommunityreport](https://go.illinois.edu/iruralprojectcommunityreport)



## SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION

SNAP-Education works with Illinois families in need to make the healthier choice an easier choice. Through classes, workshops and collaboration with community partners, SNAP-Education positively affect families and communities by using research-based solutions to encourage healthier nutrition and physical activity choices.

### Reach and Impact of SNAP-Education



**721**  
Total Estimated Reach



**58**  
Number of Nutrition Education Classes Provided



- 7% Face-to-face
- 93% Virtual or online

To continue to meet the needs of families during the COVID-19 pandemic, SNAP-Ed planned outdoor classes in Macoupin County for both youth and adults. Youth attended one nutrition education class while adults attended a separate class focusing on the importance of fruits and vegetables and how to grow your own at home using container gardening.

### SNAP-Education Community Partnerships



**6**  
K-12 Schools



**2**  
Early Childhood



**4**  
Other Agencies or Community Centers



**2**  
Food Banks and Food Pantries

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## EXTRA HELP

Donna Abbott  
Jeanette Baker  
Tyler Coady

Autumn Cobb  
Belinda Ernst  
Mary Fuchs

Penny Grundy  
Vickie Housh  
Erin Kistner

Carol Strohbeck  
Dayse Velasquez

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## OFFICE INFORMATION

### Montgomery County Extension

#1 Industrial Park Dr.  
Hillsboro, IL 62049  
(217) 532-3941  
Fax: (217) 532-3944  
Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Christian County Extension

1120 N. Webster St.  
Taylorville, IL 62568  
(217) 287-7246  
Fax: (217) 532-3944  
Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

### Jersey County Extension

201 W. Exchange St., Ste. A  
Jerseyville, IL 62052  
(618) 498-2913  
Fax: (618) 498-5913  
Tuesday - Wednesday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM  
Thursday, 8 AM - noon

### Macoupin County Extension

#60 Carlinville Plaza  
Carlinville, IL 62626  
(217) 854-9604  
Fax: (217) 532-3944  
Monday - Thursday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM

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## ONLINE



/UIExtensionCJMM



@ui\_18



/UofIExtension-CJMM

Cover photo: (top left) Payton Harding, member of Macoupin County 4-H Federation, and Jeanette Baker, Macoupin County Master Gardener, working together to add new plants at the Macoupin County Courthouse; (top right) Abby Erlenbush and Ben Wamsley, members of Christian County Youth Leadership Team, proudly display the tie-blankets made at a local workshop; (bottom left) Patrick and Daphne Slusser, members of All American Clovers 4-H Club in Jersey County, helping serve food at a 4-H event; (bottom right) Robin Davis, 4-H volunteer, teaching Olivia Dudek, member of Starr Shooters 4-H Club in Montgomery County, the basics of bread making.

# 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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