

EXTENSION CONNECTIONS



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION

We hope you enjoy your copy of this free monthly resource which highlights upcoming programs and topics for better living. To stay up to date on all of our programs, visit our web page: extension.illinois.edu/hmrs and follow us on Facebook @uiextensionhmrs

Rock Island County
321 W 2nd Ave. Milan, IL
(309) 756-9978

Henry/Stark Counties
358 Front St. Galva, IL
(309) 932-3447

Mercer County
910 13th St. Viola, IL
(309) 871-5032

Happy Holidays!

Staff will be on break December 24- January 3.
Normal work schedules resume on Monday January 4, 2021



Due to COVID-19, our offices are currently closed to foot traffic. Staff are working remotely but can be reached by phone or email. Visit our website for contact information or call your county office, leave a message and we will get back to you ASAP. Thank you!

Make your food donations count this holiday season

Illinois Extension educators Tayler Wheatley & Veronica Skardzinski

The holiday season has always been a time for reflection, gratitude, and giving to others. This year, when so many Americans have been impacted financially by the COVID-19 pandemic, food donations are more important and more needed than ever as many people are getting help for the first time. In Illinois, about 1.3 million people did not know where their next meal would come from, even before COVID-19 struck. As a result of job losses and other factors, this number has grown.

University of Illinois Extension educators Tayler Wheatley and Veronica Skardzinski share some helpful tips and resources so your gifts of food donations have the greatest impact.



How can Illinois residents find local pantries to take their donations? Start by visiting the Find Food Illinois Community Resource Map for a list and contact information of local food pantries. Be sure to call ahead to confirm location-specific hours and protocols. COVID restrictions have changed some of the rules and processes for donating food this year.

Find Food Illinois is also a great resource if you or someone you know is struggling with food insecurity any time of the year. The comprehensive food map combines all resources in one geo-location mapping tool, eliminating the need to check multiple websites and making it particularly convenient for those with limited access to transportation.

Visit the website at: go.illinois.edu/ILFoodMap

What items can you donate? Before donating, consider what you would serve to your own family and include that in your donations. Be sure to avoid donating food items that are past the use or sell-by date. Also, avoid donating perishable items, such as refrigerated items, baked goods, or leftovers, since most food banks have limited storage for perishable food. While non-perishable shelf-safe food items are preferred, they can be more processed and less healthy. Look for shelf-stable items that are lower in sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars in order to provide healthier options. **You can also give monetary donations.** Pantries and food banks purchase foods at a reduced rate, which makes monetary donations stretch further.

What items are most helpful? For helpful holiday donations, you should consider cranberry sauces, canned pumpkin; stuffing; dry macaroni; low-sodium, canned veggies, such as corn, potatoes, green beans, and carrots; boxed potatoes; low-sodium broths; gravy mix; and dried herbs and spices. **There are staple items food pantries always need,** such as oatmeal, cooking oil, canned nuts, granola bars, peanut butter, low-sugar breakfast cereal, lower sodium canned meats (chicken, tuna, pork), sugar-free canned fruit, and no sugar added applesauce.

Sign-Up for the EAT.MOVE.SAVE. Healthy Text Program!

Choose ONE of three ways to sign up to get 1-2 text messages per week! *Text message and data rates may apply.*
Text STOP to unsubscribe at any time.

Use a smartphone camera to scan and sign-up with an online form.



OR

If you live in Rock Island or Mercer County:
Text "rockisland7" to (833) 369-2916

If you live in Henry or Stark Counties
Text "henry7" to (833) 369-2916

**EAT.
MOVE.
SAVE.**



Holding Joy & Grief

Michele Crawford, Extension Educator, Community Health

While we may all celebrate different December holidays, what we share in 2020 is that this is the first time we will be celebrating during a pandemic. It is true that during any given year you probably have experienced joy as well as loss in some way or another. What is different this year is that as a society, we are experiencing loss on a grand scale.

If you celebrate Thanksgiving, perhaps this was the first year you did so via Zoom or not in the presence of family at all. These are difficult times and we are all asked to make difficult decisions regarding the health and safety of ourselves and loved ones on a daily basis. Earlier this week when sharing the details of Thanksgiving celebrations a friend shared that this was the first time her family shared not only what they were grateful for, but also what they were grieving.

As uneasy as it may seem, it is important we open our conversations to make space for grief. As a collective, we tend to ignore painful feelings. When asked “How are you?”, how many times have you responded “fine” or “good” when you really weren’t? During the past nine months, we have come to ask “How are you?” with a bit more intention, maybe even followed by “Really, how are you doing?”

As you navigate the holiday season, experiment with holding both, the joy and the grief. Yes, this is vulnerable, and yes, it may not be easy. If we want to continue to feel positive emotions, it is important to also feel the challenging emotions, as we can’t selectively deny one and not the other. If this is something you would like to explore, you might try one of the following:

Journal – Write about something that brings feelings of joy, as well as something that brings feelings of grief.

Guided Meditation– Find a comfortable seat. Place your left hand down on your left knee, and your right hand down on your right knee. Take a few calming breaths to settle in. Turn your left palm up and begin to picture in your mind a positive force in your life. It might be a friend, family member, pet or deity. Begin to notice the sensations on the left side of your body as you feel the support from this loving presence. When ready, place the left palm face down and turn the right palm up. Now bring to mind a circumstance, relationship or memory that is a source of grief or sorrow. Without judgement, feel the sensations on the right side of your body. If this becomes difficult, remind yourself that you are safe, and this is just a feeling that will pass. When ready, return the right palm back down to the knee. Feel the roundedness and stability of both hands on top of the knees. Lastly, turn both palms upward at the same time. Picture the positive force on the left, and the feelings of grief on the right. Stay curious as you welcome both. Trust that you can hold space in your body and mind for both joy and sorrow. Bring both hands together in front of the heart as you release all images from the mind and take a few calming breaths.

Talk with a friend, family member or therapist. You don’t have to do this alone. If you need someone to talk to call the NAMI HelpLine: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Same storm, different boat

Susan Odum, Extension Specialist
 Community & Economic Development



In an August 2020 article, Johns Hopkins Medicine addressed coronavirus fatigue, or “burnout”, as a concern as the pandemic wears on. The last nine months have been filled with ups and downs. Schools have transitioned from in-class learning to remote education; some schools are offering both to students and families. Healthcare workers have experienced ups and downs. Many employers and employees are experiencing uncertainty as operations ceased or were scaled back. Other employees were deemed essential, so they have been working overtime. As workers transitioned to remote work, the kitchen table or spare bedroom now serves as an office. Retail businesses and restaurants struggled to deal with restrictions on the number of customers they could serve and how they could interact with them.

While we are all in the same storm, we are in very different boats. None of our families or businesses have come through the past nine months unscathed. However, while we are challenged and frustrated, some businesses and families are struggling with sickness, death, or loss of income – or all of these. As a rule, in difficult times, we should be thankful for what we have and focus on what we can do, not what we can’t do. It sounds simple, but it can be a tall order, especially during a pandemic.

Despite their best efforts, it hasn’t been easy, and the storm is far from over as we approach perhaps the roughest times ahead this winter. **If you have the capacity, please consider lending a hand to those in need:**

- Donate to a local food bank and to local non-profit organization that helps those in need
- Shop at local businesses. It will keep your dollars circulating locally, generating tax dollars to support your local economy, which, in turn, keeps us safer by providing funds to support our local emergency response efforts.

Let’s work together to help all boats weather this storm.

Check out these FREE online workshops

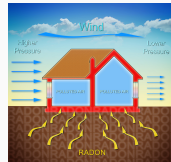


Get Savvy: Tackling Taxes | Jan 27, 12 pm

Taxes are complicated, whether you're a first-time filer or have been filing for years. How do you know if you're required to file? What are deductions and credits? Why are there so many forms, and what are they for? Join us as we walk you through the basics of taxes and provide resources to help you file for free. NOTE: This webinar is meant to be educational and will not offer individual tax advice. Register at go.illinois.edu/GetSavvy2021

Radon: Is it Still an Issue? Jan 14, 1 pm

Illinois Extension Educator Jay Solomon will discuss why radon should still be a concern for Illinois residents. As the leading cause of lung cancer for non-smokers, radon continues to be the odorless, radioactive gas silently sneaking into many homes. Winter is a good time to test your home for radon. When windows and doors are sealed tightly, radon levels inside your home can rise. Testing is easy, inexpensive and only takes a few minutes. If you find high levels of radon in your home, the problem can be fixed!



Register for this free webinar at go.illinois.edu/RadonWorkshop

SERIES: Nature & Wellness: A Strategy for Strength during a Pandemic



Join us as we hear from experts on the benefits of nature to our health and well-being. This series is brought to you by the Bi-State Conservation Action Network of which University of Illinois Extension is a member. These presenters will be sure to inspire you to bundle up and head outdoors this winter! Support for this series is provided by a grant from the Quad Cities Disaster Recovery Fund.

A Dose of Nature in a Time of Covid, Jan 7, 12 pm

The conditions of modern living (work and life pressures) threaten the health and well-being of millions of Americans. And this is especially true in the time of Covid. There is mounting evidence; however, that exposure to places that include access to green infrastructure and other forms of nature can reduce the symptoms of stress and promote recovery from mental fatigue. Some of the research has produced startling results: individuals who have more exposure to urban nature live longer, are less likely to produce low-birth-weight babies, and engage in less aggression and violence. Dr. Sullivan will consider these recent findings and discuss the implications for, and importance of, having everyday contact with nature.

Register for the webinar at go.illinois.edu/NatureAndWellness

William Sullivan, PhD, Professor and Wadsworth Head of Landscape Architecture at University of Illinois and Director of the University of Illinois' Smart, Health, Community Initiative.



GOOD GROWING
WEBINAR SERIES

Illinois Extension

Create a Winter Bird Haven January 6, 3 pm

Gardens are a haven for birds year-round. Lots of wildlife use yards for over-wintering and provide a delightful spectacle on cold days.

Attracting birds to the winter landscape can be incredibly rewarding for all ages. Horticulture Educator Chris Enroth will describe the species of birds in Illinois during the winter, what they're looking for, and how to make habitat so they stick around all year. Chris and other Extension Educators will demonstrate creative ways to feed the birds with logs, toilet paper rolls, grape fruit and a fruit and popcorn garland.

Sign up in advance to receive the link to attend at go.illinois.edu/GGWinterBirds

Children & Nature Jan 14, 12 pm



For more than twenty years, Dr. Andrea Faber Taylor has researched the benefits of nature experiences for children's health. She is passionate about supporting children's connection to nature. Her most recent research indicated a link between the frequency with which Kindergartners used greenspaces during the school-day and their capacity for self-regulation. Join us as she explains why nature experiences are so important for our daily functioning and overall well-being. She will share ideas for supporting the children in your life as well as your own health through gardening and other nature experiences. Register for the webinar at go.illinois.edu/NatureAndWellness

Andrea Faber Taylor, PhD is a Teaching Assistant Professor in the Department of Crop Sciences at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

An evidence-based look at mindful eating and health management

By Andrew Dinsmoor, dietetic intern, working with Kristin Bogdonas, nutrition & wellness educator

Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn, known for founding the 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) course, defines mindfulness as “paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally (1).” Mindfulness may be practiced anytime, including while eating. Mindful eating means paying attention to the body and the senses when eating, in the present moment and without judgment. To read more about the principles behind mindful eating, visit The Center for Mindful Eating (TCME). TCME also offers webinars and teachings on mindful eating as well as a list of research references.

A popular hands-on way to learn about mindful eating is through the “eating a raisin meditation.” Duke Integrative Medicine provides a mindful eating exercise, where one can use a raisin or food item of their choice, as a downloadable PDF. After trying a mindful eating exercise, you may notice that mindful eating invites you to slow down and take more joy in your food. The practice suggests taking an attitude of beginner’s mind. Meaning, even if you have already eaten thousands of raisins before, you eat this one raisin as if it is for the first time—and without judgment.

Unlike most things we do in life, there is no goal to attain when eating mindfully. However, mindful eating may naturally provide benefits. Since mindful eating allows you to become more aware of when you are full or hungry, you may eat more in sync with your body’s needs. For example, a 2019 systematic review and meta-analysis, which uses agreed upon scientific methods to report findings from a group of studies on a topic, suggests that mindful eating is effective for weight loss and is as effective as dieting strategies aimed at caloric restriction (2).

When practicing mindful eating, you may be more aware of eating habits not aligned with your personal or recommended health goals. Research suggests that mindful eating promotes awareness of automatic eating. Automatic eating is eating out of impulse, emotion, or habit. Awareness of automatic eating allows you to note when internal (i.e. thoughts or feelings) or external stimuli are causing you to eat. Upon noting, you have a better chance of responding instead of reacting to the stimuli, which may prevent or reduce automatic eating (3).

Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness Training (MB-EAT) interventions aim to do just this: to increase awareness of your body’s hunger cues, eating patterns or triggers that cause automatic eating. In one study, MB-EAT training in people with binge eating disorder reduced binge eating episodes and eating without control. Further, a 3-month MB-EAT program adapted for people with type 2 diabetes (MB-EAT-D) reduced weight and A1C values (3). A1C is a biomarker used for diabetes diagnosis and management. Taken together, mindful eating offers promise as a tool for managing health.

References: 1) Nelson JB. Mindful eating: The art of presence while you eat. *Diabetes Spectr.* 2017. 2) Fuentes Artiles R, Staub K, Aldakak L, Eppenberger P, Rühli F, Bender N. Mindful eating and common diet programs lower body weight similarly: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Obesity Reviews.* 2019. 3) Miller CK. Mindful eating with diabetes. *Diabetes Spectr.* 2017.



I Made That! Baking Month Education Kit January is National Baking Month and bread is on the rise!

Learn to bake yeast breads and how to make modifications to fit your family's needs. University of Illinois Extension & 4-H has a fun opportunity to enhance your baking skills! We are putting together educational cooking kits - designed to inspire the inner chef and help youth gain confidence while working in the kitchen.

Sign up to receive a January cooking kit!

The cost is \$5 per kit. It includes a baking guide, yeast bread recipes, a sensory evaluation, plus a bag of flour and yeast to get started. Additionally you will have the option to receive a 4-H oven mitt or apron so you can "bake in style"!

Register for your kit at: go.illinois.edu/IMadeThat

- Your kits will be available the 2nd week in January for you to pick up at one of our Extension offices in Viola, Milan, or Galva, IL.
- You'll then have a few weeks to utilize your kit and bake your bread.
- Complete your sensory evaluation from and upload a photo of your bread to showcase what you've learned by February 1st!
- This project is ideal for families to do together or for youth with cooking experience.

Make time to cook together as a family!

